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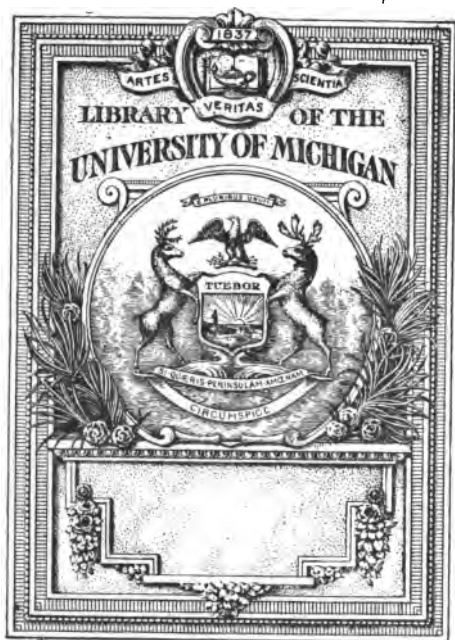
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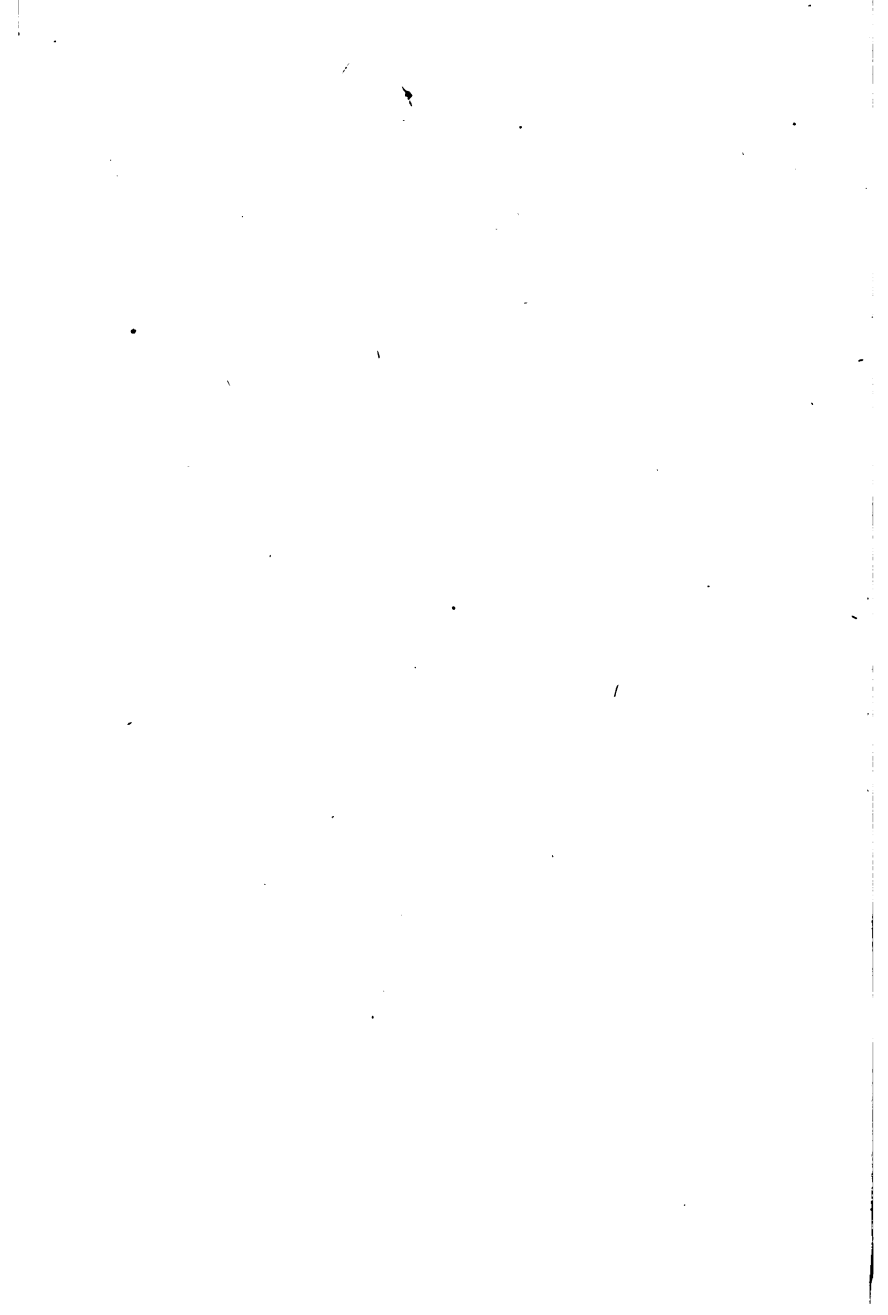
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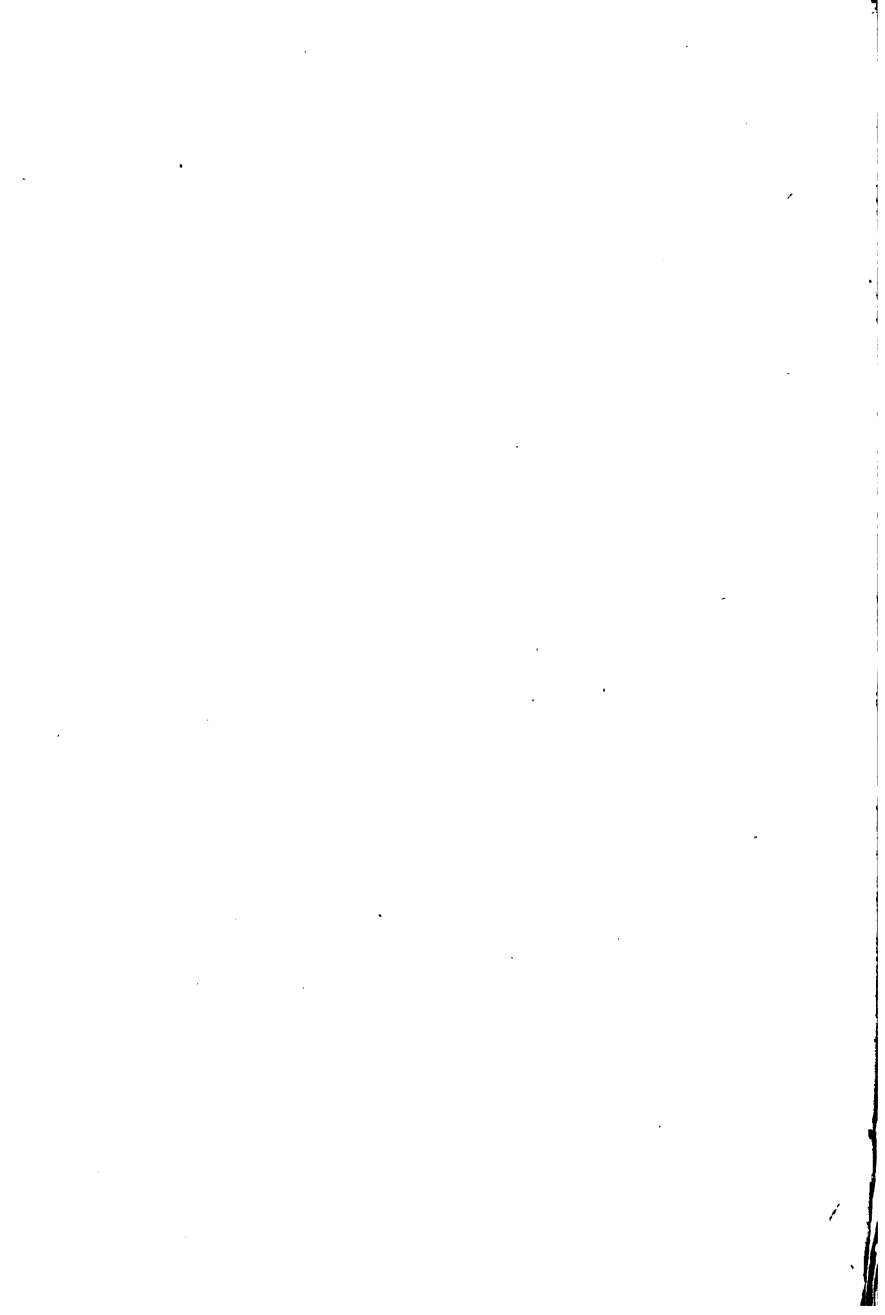
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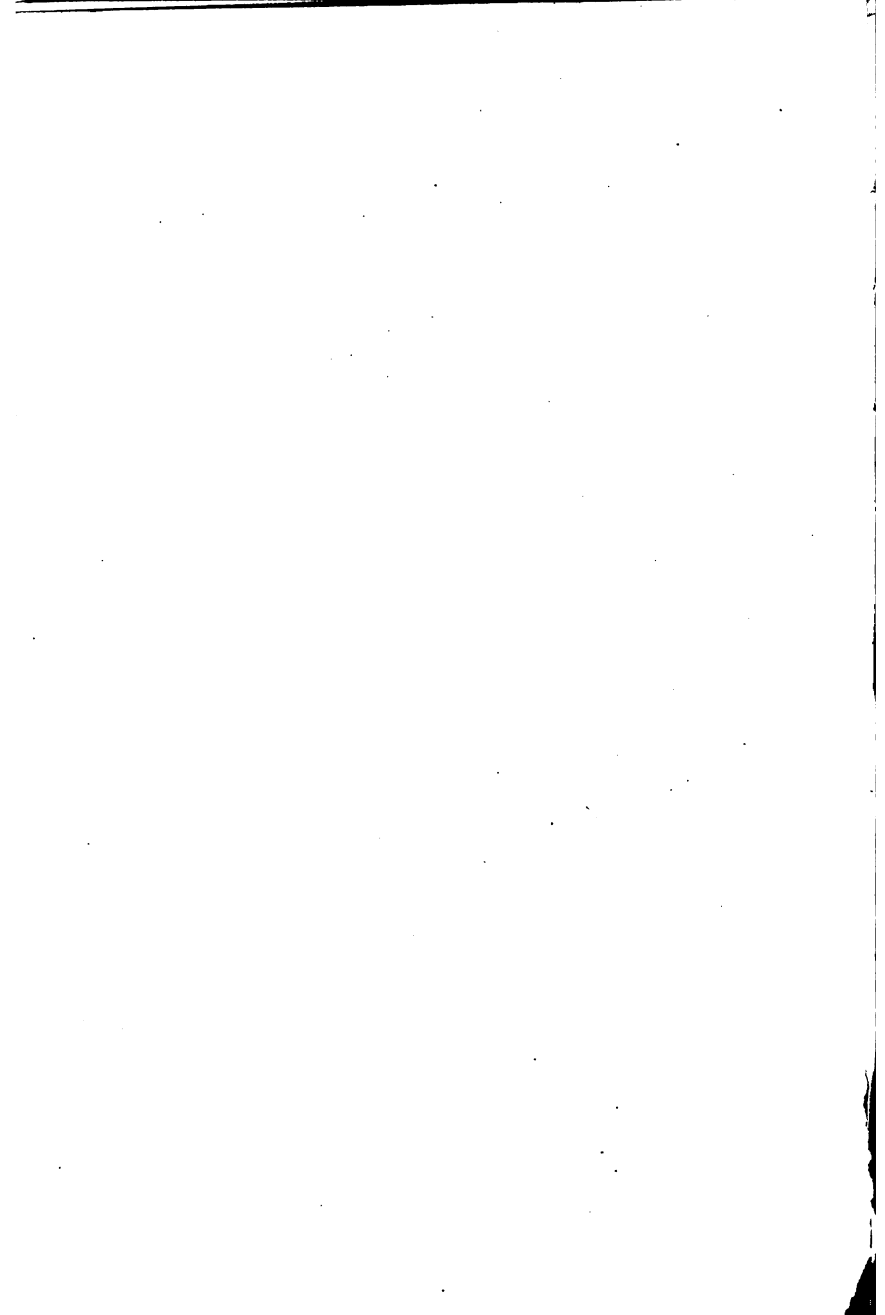








SELECTION
FROM
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING'S
POETRY



A SELECTION FROM THE
POETRY
OF
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

SECOND SERIES

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THE POET AND THE BIRD.

A FABLE.

SAID a people to a poet—"Go out from among us straightway !

While we are thinking earthly things, thou singest of divine :

There 's a little fair brown nightingale who, sitting in the gateway,

Makes fitter music to our ear than any song of thine !"

The poet went out weeping ; the nightingale ceased chanting :

"Now, wherefore, O thou nightingale, is all thy sweetness done ?"

—"I cannot sing my earthly things, the heavenly poet wanting,

Whose highest harmony includes the lowest under sun."

The poet went out weeping, and died abroad, bereft there ;

The bird flew to his grave and died amid a thousand wails :

And when I last came by the place, I swear the music left there

Was only of the poet's song, and not the nightingale's.



THE DESERTED GARDEN.

I MIND me in the days departed,
How often underneath the sun
With childish bounds I used to run
To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished quite ;
And, wheresoe'er had struck the spade,
The greenest grasses Nature laid
To sanctify her right.

I called the place my wilderness,
For no one entered there but I ;
The sheep looked in, the grass to espy,
And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,
And spread their boughs enough about
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,
But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me !
I crept beneath the boughs, and found
A circle smooth of mossy ground
Beneath a poplar tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,
Bedropt with roses waxen-white
Well satisfied with dew and light
And careless to be seen.

Long years ago it might befall,
When all the garden flowers were trim,
The grave old gardener prided him,
On these the most of all.

Some lady, stately overmuch,
Here moving with a silken noise,
Has blushed beside them at the voice
That likened her to such.

And these, to make a diadem,
She often may have plucked and twined,
Half-smiling as it came to mind
That few would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that lady proud,
A child would watch her fair white rose,
When buried lay her whiter brows,
And silk was changed for shroud :—

Nor thought that gardener, (full of scorns
For men unlearned and simple phrase,)
A child would bring it all its praise
By creeping through the thorns !

To me upon my low moss seat,
Though never a dream the roses sent
Of science or love's compliment,
I ween they smelt as sweet.

It did not move my grief to see
The trace of human step departed :
Because the garden was deserted,
The blither place for me !

Friends, blame me not ! a narrow ken,
Has childhood 'twixt the sun and sward ;
We draw the moral afterward,
We feel the gladness then.

And gladdest hours for me did glide
In silence at the rose-tree wall :

A thrush made gladness musical
Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline
To peck or pluck the blossoms white ;
How should I know but roses might
Lead lives as glad as mine ?

To make my hermit-home complete,
I brought clear water from the spring
Praised in its own low murmuring,
And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought, my likeness grew
(Without the melancholy tale)
To "gentle hermit of the dale,"
And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook
Such minstrel stories ; till the breeze
Made sounds poetic in the trees,
And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write
I hear no more the wind athwart
Those trees, nor feel that childish heart
Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted,
My footstep from the moss which drew
Its fairy circle round : anew
The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse
The madrigals which sweetest are ;
No more for me ! myself afar
Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me ! when erst I lay
In that child's-nest so greenly wrought,
I laughed unto myself and thought
 " The time will pass away."

And still I laughed, and did not fear
But that, whene'er was past away
The childish time, some happier play
 My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away,
And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,
Dear God, how seldom, if at all,
 Did I look up to pray !

The time is past ; and now that grows
The cypress high among the trees,
And I behold white sepulchres
 As well as the white rose,—

When graver, meeker thoughts are given,
And I have learnt to lift my face,
Reminded how earth's greenest place
 The colour draws from heaven,—

It something saith for earthly pain,
But more for Heavenly promise free,
That I who was, would shrink to be
 That happy child again.



THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS.

I WOULD build a cloudy House
 For my thoughts to live in,
When for earth too fancy-loose,
 And too low for heaven :

Hush ! I talk my dream aloud,
I build it bright to see,—
I build it on the moonlit cloud
To which I looked with *thee*.

Cloud-walls of the morning's grey,
Faced with amber column,
Crowned with crimson cupola
From a sunset solemn :
May-mists, for the casements, fetch,
Pale and glimmering,
With a sunbeam hid in each
And a smell of spring.

Build the entrance high and proud,
Darkening and then brightening,
Of a riven thunder-cloud,
Veinèd by the lightning :
Use one with an iris-stain
For the door so thin,
Turning to a sound like rain
As I enter in.

Build a spacious hall thereby
Boldly, never fearing ;
Use the blue place of the sky
Which the wind is clearing :
Branched with corridors sublime,
Flecked with winding stairs,
Such as children wish to climb
Following their own prayers.

In the mutest of the house,
I will have my chamber ;
Silence at the door shall use
Evening's light of amber,

Solemnizing every mood,
Softening in degree,
Turning sadness into good
As I turn the key.

Be my chamber tapestried
With the showers of summer,
Close, but soundless, glorified
When the sunbeams come here—
Wandering harpers, harping on
Waters stringed for such,
Drawing colour, for a tune,
With a vibrant touch.

Bring a shadow green and still
From the chestnut-forest,
Bring a purple from the hill
When the heat is sorest ;
Spread them out from wall to wall,
Carpet-wove around,
Whereupon the foot shall fall
In light instead of sound.

Bring fantastic cloudlets home
From the noontide zenith,
Ranged for sculptures round the room,
Named as Fancy weeneth ;
Some be Junos, without eyes,
Naiads, without sources,
Some be birds of paradise,
Some, Olympian horses.

Bring the dews the birds shake off
Waking in the hedges,—
Those too, perfumed for a proof,
From the lilies' edges :

From our England's field and moor,
 Bring them calm and white in,
 Whence to form a mirror pure
 For Love's self-delighting.

Bring a grey cloud from the east
 Where the lark is singing,
 (Something of the song at least
 Unlost in the bringing) :
 That shall be a morning-chair
 Poet-dream may sit in
 When it leans out on the air,
 Unrhymed and unwritten.

Bring the red cloud from the sun,
 While he sinketh catch it ;
 That shall be a couch,—with one
 Sidelong star to watch it,—
 Fit for poet's finest thought
 At the curfew-sounding ;
 Things unseen being nearer brought
 Than the seen, around him.

Poet's thought,—not poet's sigh.
 'Las, they come together !
 Cloudy walls divide and fly
 As in April weather.
 Cupola and column proud,
 Structure bright to see,
 Gone ! except that moonlit cloud
 To which I looked with *thee*.

Let them ! Wipe such visionings
 From the fancy's cartel :
 Love secures some fairer things,
 Dowered with his immortal.

The sun may darken, heaven be bowed
But still unchanged shall be,—
Here, in my soul,—that moonlit cloud
To which I looked with THEE !

A SABBATH MORNING AT SEA.

THE ship went on with solemn face ;
To meet the darkness on the deep,
The solemn ship went onward :
I bowed down weary in the place,
For parting tears and present sleep
Had weighed mine eyelids downward.

Thick sleep which shut all dreams from me
And kept my inner self apart
And quiet from emotion,
Then brake away and left me free,
Made conscious of a human heart
Betwixt the heaven and ocean.

The new sight, the new wondrous sight !
The waters round me, turbulent,
The skies impassive o'er me,
Calm in a moonless, sunless light,
Half glorified by that intent
Of holding the day-glory !

Two pale thin clouds did stand upon
The meeting line of sea and sky,
With aspect still and mystic :
I think they did foresee the sun,
And rested on their prophecy
In quietude majestic,

Then flushed to radiance where they stood,
Like statues by the open tomb
Of shining saints half risen.
The sun !—he came up to be viewed,
And sky and sea made mighty room
To inaugurate the vision.

I oft had seen the dawnlight run
As red wine through the hills, and break
Through many a mist's inurning ;
But, here, no earth profaned the sun :
Heaven, ocean, did alone partake
The sacrament of morning.

Away with thoughts fantastical !
I would be humble to my worth,
Self-guarded as self-doubted :
Though here no earthly shadows fall,
I, joying, grieving without earth,
May desecrate without it.

God's sabbath morning sweeps the waves ;
I would not praise the pageant high
Yet miss the dedicature :
I, carried toward the sunless graves
By force of natural things,—should I
Exult in only nature ?

And could I bear to sit alone
'Mid nature's fixed benignities,
While my warm pulse was moving ?
Too dark thou art, O glittering sun,
Too strait ye are, capacious seas,
To satisfy the loving !

It seems a better lot than so,
To sit with friends beneath the beech,
And feel them dear and dearer ;

Or follow children as they go
In pretty pairs, with softened speech,
As the church-bells ring nearer.

Love me, sweet friends, this sabbath day !
The sea sings round me while ye roll
Afar the hymn unaltered,
And kneel, where once I knelt to pray,
And bless me deeper in the soul,
Because the voice has faltered.

And though this sabbath comes to me
Without the stol'd minister
Or chanting congregation,
God's Spirit brings communion, HE
Who brooded soft on waters drear,
Creator on creation.

Himself, I think, shall draw me higher,
Where keep the saints with harp and song
An endless sabbath morning,
And on that sea commixed with fire
Oft drop their eyelids, raised too long
To the full Godhead's burning.

*AN ISLAND.*

All goeth but Goddis will.—OLD POET.

MY dream is of an island-place
Which distant seas keep lonely,
A little island on whose face
The stars are watchers only.
Those bright still stars ! they need not seem
Brighter or stiller in my dream.

An island full of hills and dells,
All rumbled and uneven
With green recesses, sudden swells,
And odorous valleys driven
So deep and straight that always there
The wind is cradled to soft air.

Hills running up to heaven for light
Through woods that half-way ran,
As if the wild earth mimicked right
The wilder heart of man :
Only it shall be greener far
And gladder than hearts ever are.

More like, perhaps, that mountain piece
Of Dante's paradise,
Disrupt to an hundred hills like these,
In falling from the skies ;
Bringing within it, all the roots
Of heavenly trees and flowers and fruits :

For saving where the grey rocks strike
Their javelins up the azure,
Or where deep fissures miser-like
Hoard up some fountain treasure,
(And e'en in them, stoop down and hear,
Leaf sounds with water in your ear,—)

The place is all awave with trees,
Limes, myrtles purple-beaded,
Acacias having drunk the lees
Of the night-dew, faint-headed,
And wan grey olive-woods which seem
The fittest foliage for a dream.

Trees, trees on all sides ! they combine
Their plummy shades to throw,

Through whose clear fruit and blossom fine
 Whene'er the sun may go,
The ground beneath he deeply stains,
As passing through cathedral panes.

But little needs this earth of ours
 That shining from above her,
When many Pleiades of flowers
 (Not one lost) star her over,
The rays of their unnumbered hues
Being all refracted by the dews.

Wide-petalled plants that boldly drink
 The Amreeta of the sky,
Shut bells that dull with rapture sink,
 And lolling buds, half shy ;
I cannot count them, but between
Is room for grass and mosses green,

And brooks; that glass in different strengths
 All colours in disorder,
Or, gathering up their silver lengths
 Beside their winding border,
Sleep, haunted through the slumber hidden,
By lilies white as dreams in Eden.

Nor think each arch'd tree with each
 Too closely interlaces
To admit of vistas out of reach,
 And broad moon-lighted places
Upon whose sward the antlered deer
May view their double image clear.

For all this island 's creature-full,
 (Kept happy not by halves)
Mild cows, that at the vine-wreaths pull,
 Then low back at their calves

With tender lowings, to approve
The warm mouths milking them for love.

Free gamesome horses, antelopes,
And harmless leaping leopards,
And buffaloes upon the slopes,
And sheep unrul'd by shepherds :
Hares, lizards, hedgehogs, badgers, mice,
Snakes, squirrels, frogs, and butterflies.

And birds that live there in a crowd,
Horned owls, rapt nightingales,
Larks bold with heaven, and peacocks proud
Self-sphered in those grand tails ;
All creatures glad and safe, I deem :
No guns nor springes in my dream !

The island's edges are a-wing
With trees that overbranch
The sea with song-birds welcoming
The curlews to green change ;
And doves from half-closed lids espy
The red and purple fish go by.

One dove is answering in trust
The water every minute,
Thinking so soft a murmur must
Have her mate's cooing in it :
So softly doth earth's beauty round
Infuse itself in ocean's sound.

My sanguine soul bounds forwarder
To meet the bounding waves ;
Beside them straightway I repair,
To live within the caves :
And near me two or three may dwell
Whom dreams fantastic please as well.

Long winding caverns, glittering far
Into a crystal distance !
Through clefts of which, shall many a star
Shine clear without resistance
And carry down its rays the smell
Of flowers above invisible.

I said that two or three might choose
Their dwelling near mine own :
Those who would change man's voice and use,
For Nature's way and tone—
Man's veering heart and careless eyes,
For Nature's steadfast sympathies.

Ourselves, to meet her faithfulness,
Shall play a faithful part ;
Her beautiful shall ne'er address
The monstrous at our heart :
Her musical shall ever touch
Something within us also such.

Yet shall she not our mistress live,
As doth the moon of ocean,
Though gently as the moon she give
Our thoughts a light and motion :
More like a harp of many lays,
Moving its master while he plays.

No sod in all that island doth
Yawn open for the dead ;
No wind hath borne a traitor's oath ;
No earth, a mourner's tread ;
We cannot say by stream or shade,
" I suffered *here*,—was *here* betrayed."

Our only "farewell" we shall laugh
To shifting cloud or hour,

And use our only epitaph
To some bud turned a flower :
Our only tears shall serve to prove
Excess in pleasure or in love.

Our fancies shall their plumage catch
From fairest island-birds,
Whose eggs let young ones out at hatch,
Born singing ! then our words
Unconsciously shall take the dyes
Of those prodigious fantasies.

Yea, soon, no consonant unsmooth
Our smile-tuned lips shall reach ;
Sounds sweet as Hellas spake in youth,
Shall glide into our speech :
(What music, certes, can you find
As soft as voices which are kind ?)

And often, by the joy without
And in us, overcome,
We, through our musing, shall let float
Such poems,—sitting dumb,—
As Pindar might have writ if he
Had tended sheep in Arcady ;

Or Æschylus—the pleasant fields
He died in, longer knowing ;
Or Homer, had men's sins and shields
Been lost in Meles, flowing ;
Or Poet Plato, had the undim
Unsetting Godlight broke on him

Choose me the cave most worthy choice,
To make a place for prayer,
And I will choose a praying voice
To pour our spirits there :

How silverly the echoes run !
Thy will be done,—thy will be done.

Gently yet strangely uttered words !
 They lift me from my dream ;
 The island fadeth with its swards
 That did no more than seem :
 The streams are dry, no sun could find—
 The fruits are fallen, without wind.

So oft the doing of God's will
 Our foolish wills undoeth !
 And yet what idle dream breaks ill,
 Which morning light subdueth !
 And who would murmur and misdoubt,
 When God's great sunrise finds him out ?



THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING.

Ἡδὴ νοερός
 Πητασαι ταρσούς.

SYNESIUS.

I DWELL amid the city ever.
 The great humanity which beats
 Its life along the stony streets,
 Like a strong and unsunned river
 In a self-made course,
 I sit and harken while it rolls.
 Very sad and very hoarse
 Certes is the flow of souls ;
 Infinitest tendencies
 By the finite prest and pent,
 In the finite, turbulent :
 How we tremble in surprise

When sometimes, with an awful sound,
God's great plummet strikes the ground !

The champ of the steeds on the silver bit,
As they whirl the rich man's carriage by ;
The beggar's whine as he looks at it,—
But it goes too fast for charity ;
The trail on the street of the poor man's broom,
That the lady who walks to her palace-home,
On her silken skirt may catch no dust ;
The tread of the business-men who must
Count their per-cents by the paces they take ;
The cry of the babe unheard of its mother
Though it lie on her breast, while she thinks of the other
Laid yesterday where it will not wake ;
The flower-girl's prayer to buy roses and pinks,
Held out in the smoke, like stars by day ;
The gin-door's oath that hollowly chinks
Guilt upon grief and wrong upon hate ;
The cabman's cry to get out of the way ;
The dustman's call down the area-grate ;
The young maid's jest, and the old wife's scold,
The haggling talk of the boys at a stall,
The fight in the street which is backed for gold,
The plea of the lawyers in Westminster Hall ;
The drop on the stones of the blind man's staff
As he trades in his own grief's sacredness,
The brothel shriek, and the Newgate laugh,
The hum upon 'Change, and the organ's grinding,
(The grinder's face being nevertheless
Dry and vacant of even woe
While the children's hearts are leaping so
At the merry music's winding ;))
The black-plumed funerals' creeping train
Long and slow (and yet they will go
As fast as Life though it hurry and strain !)

Creeping the populous houses through
And nodding their plumes at either side,—
At many a house where an infant, new
To the sunshiny world, has just struggled and cried,—
At many a house where sitteth a bride
Trying to-morrow's coronals
With a scarlet blush to-day :

 Slowly creep the funerals,
As none should hear the noise and say,
The living, the living must go away
 To multiply the dead.

Hark ! an upward shout is sent,
In grave strong joy from tower to steeple
 The bells ring out,
The trumpets sound, the people shout,
The young queen goes to her parliament ;
She turneth round her large blue eyes
More bright with childish memories
Than royal hopes, upon the people ;
On either side she bows her head

 Lowly, with a queenly grace,
And smile most trusting-innocent,
As if she smiled upon her mother ;
The thousands press before each other
 To bless her to her face ;
And booms the deep majestic voice
Through trump and drum,—“ May the queen rejoice
 In the people's liberties ! ”

I dwell amid the city,
And hear the flow of souls in act and speech,
For pomp or trade, for merrymake or folly :
I hear the confluence and sum of each,
 And that is melancholy !
Thy voice is a complaint, O crown'd city,
The blue sky covering thee like God's great pity !

O blue sky ! it mindeth me
Of places where I used to see
Its vast unbroken circle thrown
From the far pale-peak'd hill
Out to the last verge of ocean,
As by God's arm it were done
Then for the first time, with the emotion
Of that first impulse on it still.
Oh, we spirits fly at will
Faster than the wing'd steed
Whereof in old book we read,
With the sunlight foaming back
From his flanks to a misty wrack,
And his nostril reddening proud
As he breasteth the steep thunder-cloud,—
Smoother than Sabrina's chair
Gliding up from wave to air,
While she smileth debonair
Yet holy, coldly and yet brightly,
Like her own mooned waters nightly,
Through her dripping hair.

Very fast and smooth we fly,
Spirits, though the flesh be by ;
All looks feed not from the eye
Nor all hearings from the ear :
We can harken and espy
Without either, we can journey
Bold and gay as knight to tourney ;
And, though we wear no visor down
To dark our countenance, the foe
Shall never chafe us as we go.

I am gone from peopled town !
It passeth its street-thunder round
My body which yet hears no sound,

For now another sound, another
Vision, my soul's senses have—
O'er a hundred valleys deep
Where the hills' green shadows sleep
Scarce known because the valley-trees
Cross those upland images,
O'er a hundred hills each other
Watching to the western wave,
I have travelled,—I have found
The silent, lone, remembered ground.

I have found a grassy niche
Hollowed in a seaside hill,
As if the ocean-grandeur which
Is aspectable from the place,
Had struck the hill as with a mace
Sudden and cleaving. You might fill
That little nook with the little cloud
Which sometimes lieth by the moon
To beautify a night of June ;
A cavelike nook which, opening all
To the wide sea, is disallowed
From its own earth's sweet pastoral ;
Cavelike, but roofless overhead
And made of verdant banks instead
Of any rocks, with flowerets spread
Instead of spar and stalactite,
Cowslips and daisies gold and white :
Such pretty flowers on such green sward,
You think the sea they look toward
Doth serve them for another sky
As warm and blue as that on high.

And in this hollow is a seat,
And when you shall have crept to it,
Slipping down the banks too steep

To be o'erbrowzèd by the sheep,
Do not think—though at your feet
The cliff's disrupt—you shall behold
The line where earth and ocean meet ;
You sit too much above to view
The solemn confluence of the two :
You can hear them as they greet,
You can hear that evermore
Distance-softened noise more old
Than Nereid's singing, the tide spent
Joining soft issues with the shore
In harmony of discontent ;
And when you harken to the grave
Lamenting of the underwave,
You must believe in earth's communion
Albeit you witness not the union.

Except that sound, the place is full
Of silences, which when you cull
By any word, it thrills you so
That presently you let them grow
To meditation's fullest length
Across your soul with a soul's strength :
And as they touch your soul, they borrow
Both of its grandeur and its sorrow,
That deathly odour which the clay
Leaves on its deathlessness away.

Alway ! alway ? must this be ?
Rapid Soul from city gone,
Dost thou carry inwardly
What doth make the city's moan ?
Must this deep sigh of thine own
Haunt thee with humanity ?
Green visioned banks that are too steep
To be o'erbrowzèd by the sheep,

May all sad thoughts adown you creep
Without a shepherd? Mighty sea,
Can we dwarf thy magnitude
And fit it to our straitest mood?
O fair, fair Nature, are we thus
Impotent and querulous
Among thy workings glorious,
Wealth and sanctities, that still
Leave us vacant and defiled
And wailing like a soft-kissed child,
Kissed soft against his will?

God, God !
With a child's voice I cry,
Weak, sad, confidingly—
God, God !

Thou knowest, eyelids, raised not always up
Unto Thy love (as none of ours are) droop
As ours, o'er many a tear ;
Thou knowest, though Thy universe is broad,
Two little tears suffice to cover all :
Thou knowest, Thou who art so prodigal
Of beauty, we are oft but stricken deer
Expiring in the woods, that care for none
Of those delightful flowers they die upon.

O blissful Mouth which breathed the mournful breath
We name our souls, self-spoilt !—by that strong passion
Which paled Thee once with sighs, by that strong death
Which made Thee once unbreathing—from the wrack
Themselves have called around them, call them back,
Back to Thee in continuous aspiration !

For here, O Lord,
For here they travel vainly, vainly pass
From city-pavement to untrodden sward
Where the lark finds her deep nest in the grass

Cold with the earth's last dew. Yea, very vain
The greatest speed of all these souls of men
Unless they travel upward to the throne
Where sittest THOU the satisfying ONE,
With help for sins and holy perfectings
For all requirements : while the archangel, raising
Unto Thy face his full ecstatic gazing,
Forgets the rush and rapture of his wings.

THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.

WHEN ye stood up in the house
With your little childish feet,
And, in touching Life's first shows,
First the touch of Love did meet—
Love and Nearness seeming one,
By the heartlight cast before,
And of all Beloveds, none
Standing farther than the door ;
Not a name being dear to thought,
With its owner beyond call ;
Not a face, unless it brought
Its own shadow to the wall ;
When the worst recorded change
Was an apple dropt from bough,
When love's sorrow seemed more strange
Than love's treason can seem now ;—
Then, the Loving took you up
Soft, upon their elder knees,
Telling why the statues droop
Underneath the churchyard trees,
And how ye must lie beneath them
Through the winters long and deep,
Till the last trump overbreathe them,
And ye smile out of your sleep.

Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if they said
A tale of fairy ships
With a swan-wing for a sail ;
Oh, ye kissed their loving lips
For the merry, merry tale—
So carelessly ye thought upon the Dead !

Soon ye read in solemn stories
Of the men of long ago,
Of the pale bewildering glories
Shining farther than we know ;
Of the heroes with the laurel,
Of the poets with the bay,
Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel
For that beauteous Helena ;
How Achilles at the portal
Of the tent heard footsteps nigh,
And his strong heart, half-immortal,
Met the *keïtai* with a cry ;
How Ulysses left the sunlight
For the pale eidola race
Blank and passive through the dun light,
Staring blindly in his face ;
How that true wife said to Pœtus,
With calm smile and wounded heart,
" Sweet, it hurts not ! " How Admetus
Saw his blessed one depart ;
How King Arthur proved his mission,
And Sir Roland wound his horn,
And at Sangreal's moony vision
Swords did bristle round like corn.
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed, the while ye
read,
That this Death, then, must be found
A Valhalla for the crowned,
The heroic who prevail :

None, be sure can enter in
Far below a paladin
Of a noble, noble tale—
So awfully ye thought upon the Dead !

Ay, but soon ye woke up shrieking,
As a child that wakes at night
From a dream of sisters speaking
In a garden's summer-light—
That wakes, starting up and bounding,
In a lonely, lonely bed,
With a wall of darkness round him,
Stifling black about his head !
And the full sense of your mortal
Rushed upon you deep and loud,
And ye heard the thunder hurtle
From the silence of the cloud.
Funeral-torches at your gateway
Threw a dreadful light within.
All things changed : you rose up straightway,
And saluted Death and Sin.
Since, your outward man has rallied,
And your eye and voice grown bold ;
Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,
With her saddest secret told.
Happy places have grown holy :
If ye went where once ye went,
Only tears would fall down slowly,
As at solemn sacrament.
Merry books, once read for pastime,
If ye dared to read again,
Only memories of the last time
Would swim darkly up the brain.
Household names, which used to flutter
Through your laughter unawares,—
God's Divinest ye could utter

With less trembling in your prayers.
Ye have dropt adown your head, and it seems as if ye
tread

On your own hearts in the path
Ye are called to in His wrath,
And your prayers go up in wail
—"Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,
O Thou agonized on cross?
Art thou reading all its tale?"
So mournfully ye think upon the Dead!

Pray, pray, thou who also weapest,
And the drops will slacken so.
Weep, weep, and the watch thou keepest,
With a quicker count will go.
Think : the shadow on the dial
For the nature most undone,
Marks the passing of the trial,
Proves the presence of the sun.
Look, look up, in starry passion,
To the throne above the spheres :
Learn : the spirit's gravitation
Still must differ from the tear's.
Hope : with all the strength thou usest
In embracing thy despair.
Love : the earthly love thou lovest
Shall return to thee more fair.
Work : make clear the forest-tangles
Of the wildest stranger-land.
Trust : the bless'd deathly angels
Whisper, "Sabbath hours at hand!"
By the heart's wound when most gory,
By the longest agony,
Smile!—Behold in sudden glory
The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee!*
And ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if He said,

"My Belovèd, is it so?
 Have ye tasted of my woe?
 Of my Heaven ye shall not fail!"
 He stands brightly where the shade is,
 With the keys of Death and Hades,
 And there, ends the mournful tale—
 So hopefully ye think upon the Dead!

THE POET.

THE poet hath the child's sight in his breast
 And sees all *new*. What oftenest he has viewed,
 He views with the first glory. Fair and good
 Pall never on him, at the fairest, best,
 But stand before him holy and undressed
 In week-day false conventions, such as would
 Drag other men down from the altitude
 Of primal types, too early dispossessed.
 Why, God would tire of all His heavens, as soon
 As thou, O godlike, childlike poet, didst
 Of daily and nightly sights of sun and moon!
 And therefore hath He set thee in the midst
 Where men may hear thy wonder's ceaseless tune,
 And praise His world for ever, as thou bidst.

NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN.

NIGHT.

'NEATH my moon what doest thou,
 With a somewhat paler brow
 Than she giveth to the ocean?
 He, without a pulse or motion,
 Muttering low before her stands,

Lifting his invoking hands
Like a seer before a sprite,
To catch her oracles of light :
But thy soul out-trembles now
Many pulses on thy brow.
Where be all thy laughs clear,
Others laughed alone to hear ?
Where thy quaint jests, said for fame ?
Where thy dances, mixed with game ?
Where thy festive companies,
Moonëd o'er with ladies' eyes
All more bright for thee, I trow ?
'Neath my moon what doest thou ?

THE MERRY MAN.

I AM digging my warm heart
Till I find its coldest part ;
I am digging wide and low,
Further than a spade will go,
Till that, when the pit is deep
And large enough, I there may heap .
All my present pain and past
Joy, dead things that look aghast
By the daylight : now 't is done.
Throw them in, by one and one !
I must laugh, at rising sun.

Memories—of fancy's golden
Treasures which my hands have holden,
Till the chillness made them ache ;
Of childhood's hopes that used to wake
If birds were in a singing strain,
And for less cause, sleep again ;
Of the moss-seat in the wood
Where I trysted solitude ;
Of the hill-top where the wind

Used to follow me behind,
Then in sudden rush to blind
Both my glad eyes with my hair,
Taken gladly in the snare ;
Of the climbing up the rocks,
Of the playing 'neath the oaks
Which retain beneath them now
Only shadow of the bough ;
Of the lying on the grass
While the clouds did overpass,
Only they, so lightly driven,
Seeming betwixt me and Heaven ;
Of the little prayers serene,
Murmuring of earth and sin ;
Of large-leaved philosophy
Leaning from my childish knee ;
Of poetic book sublime,
Soul-kissed for the first dear time,
Greek or English, ere I knew
Life was not a poem too :—
Throw them in, by one and one !
I must laugh, at rising sun.

—Of the glorious ambitions
Yet unquenched by their fruitions ;
Of the reading out the nights ;
Of the straining at mad heights ;
Of achievements, less descried
By a dear few than magnified ;
Of praises from the many earned
When praise from love was undiscerned ;
Of the sweet reflecting gladness
Softened by itself to sadness :—
Throw them in, by one and one !
I must laugh, at rising sun.

What are these? more, more than these
Throw in dearer memories!—
Of voices whereof but to speak
Makes mine own all sunk and weak;
Of smiles the thought of which is sweeping
All my soul to floods of weeping;
Of looks whose absence fain would weigh
My looks to the ground for aye;
Of clasping hands—ah me, I wring
Mine, and in a tremble fling
Downward, downward all this paining!
Partings with the sting remaining,
Meetings with a deeper throe
Since the joy is ruined so,
Changes with a fiery burning,
(Shadows upon all the turning,)
Thoughts of . . with a storm they came,
Them I have not breath to name:
Downward, downward be they cast
In the pit! and now at last
My work beneath the moon is done,
And I shall laugh, at rising sun.

But let me pause or ere I cover
All my treasures darkly over:
I will speak not in thine ears,
Only tell my beaded tears
Silently, most silently.
When the last is calmly told,
Let that same moist rosary
With the rest sepulchred be.
Finished now! The darksome mould
Sealeth up the darksome pit.
I will lay no stone on it,
Grasses I will sow instead,
Fit for Queen Titania's tread;

Flowers, encoloured with the sun,
 And *at at* written upon none ;
 Thus, whenever saileth by
 The Lady World of dainty eye,
 Not a grief shall here remain,
 Silken shoon to damp or stain :
 And while she lisps, " I have not seen
 Any place more smooth and clean " . .
 Here she cometh !—Ha, ha !—who
 Laughs as loud as I can do ?



MAN AND NATURE.

A SAD man on a summer day
 Did look upon the earth and say—
 " Purple cloud, the hill-top binding,
 Folded hills, the valleys wind in,
 Valleys, with fresh streams among you,
 Streams, with bosky trees along you,
 Trees, with many birds and blossoms,
 Birds, with music-trembling bosoms,
 Blossoms, dropping dews that wreathe you
 To your fellow flowers beneath you,
 Flowers, that constellate on earth,
 Earth, that shakest to the mirth
 Of the merry Titan ocean,
 All his shining hair in motion !
 Why am I thus the only one
 Who can be dark beneath the sun ?

But when the summer day was past,
 He looked to heaven and smiled at last,
 Self-answered so—

" Because, O cloud,
 Pressing with thy crumpled shroud

Heavily on mountain top,—
 Hills, that almost seem to drop
 Stricken with a misty death
 To the valleys underneath,—
 Valleys, sighing with the torrent,—
 Waters, streaked with branches horrent,—
 Branchless trees, that shake your head
 Wildly o'er your blossoms spread
 Where the common flowers are found,—
 Flowers, with foreheads to the ground,—
 Ground, that shrieketh while the sea
 With his iron smiteth thee—
 I am, besides, the only one
 Who can be bright *without* the sun."



A SEA-SIDE WALK.

WE walked beside the sea
 After a day which perished silently
 Of its own glory—like the princess weird
 Who, combating the Genius, scorched and seared,
 Uttered with burning breath, "Ho, victory!"
 And sank adown, a heap of ashes pale :
 So runs the Arab tale.

The sky above us showed
 A universal and unmoving cloud
 On which the cliffs permitted us to see
 Only the outline of their majesty,
 As master-minds when gazed at by the crowd :
 And shining with a gloom, the water grey
 Swang in its moon-taught way.

Nor moon, nor stars were out ;
 They did not dare to tread so soon about,

Though trembling, in the footsteps of the sun :
The light was neither night's nor day's, but one
Which, life-like, had a beauty in its doubt,
And silence's impassioned breathings round
Seemed wandering into sound.

O solemn-beating heart
Of nature ! I have knowledge that thou art
Bound unto man's by cords he cannot sever ;
And, what time they are slackened by him ever,
So to attest his own supernal part,
Still runneth thy vibration fast and strong
The slackened cord along.

For though we never spoke
Of the grey water and the shaded rock,
Dark wave and stone unconsciously were fused
Into the plaintive speaking that we used
Of absent friends and memories unforsook ;
And, had we seen each other's face, we had
Seen haply each was sad.

*AN APPREHENSION.*

If all the gentlest-hearted friends I know
Concentred in one heart their gentleness,
That still grew gentler till its pulse was less
For life than pity—I should yet be slow
To bring my own heart nakedly below
The palm of such a friend, that he should press
Motive, condition, means, appliances,
My false ideal joy and fickle woe,
Out full to light and knowledge ; I should fear
Some plait between the brows, some rougher chime
In the free voice. O angels, let your flood

Of bitter scorn dash on me ! do ye hear
 What *I* say who bear calmly all the time
 This everlasting face to face with GOD ?



THE POET'S VOW.

— O be wiser thou,
 Instructed that true knowledge leads to love!
 WORDSWORTH.

PART THE FIRST.

SHOWING WHEREFORE THE VOW WAS MADE.

EVE is a twofold mystery ;
 The stillness Earth doth keep,
 The motion wherewith human hearts
 Do each to either leap
 As if all souls between the poles
 Felt "Parting comes in sleep."

The rowers lift their oars to view
 Each other in the sea ;
 The landsmen watch the rocking boats
 In a pleasant company ;
 While up the hill go gladlier still
 Dear friends by two and three.

The peasant's wife hath looked without
 Her cottage door and smiled,
 For there the peasant drops his spade
 To clasp his youngest child
 Which hath no speech, but its hand can reach
 And stroke his forehead mild.

A poet sate that eventide
 Within his hall alone,
 As silent as its ancient lords
 In the confined place of stone,

When the bat hath shrunk from the praying monk,
And the praying monk is gone.

Nor wore the dead a stiller face
Beneath the cerement's roll :
His lips refusing out in words
Their mystic thoughts to dole,
His steadfast eye burnt inwardly,
As burning out his soul.

You would not think that brow could e'er
Ungentle moods express,
Yet seemed it, in this troubled world,
Too calm for gentleness,
When the very star that shines from far
Shines trembling ne'ertheless.

It lacked, all need, the softening light
Which other brows supply :
We should conjoin the scath'd trunks
Of our humanity,
That each leafless spray entwining may
Look softer 'gainst the sky.

None gazed within the poet's face,
The poet gazed in none ;
He threw a lonely shadow straight
Before the moon and sun,
Affronting nature's heaven-dwelling creatures
With wrong to nature done ;

Because this poet daringly,
—The nature at his heart,
And that quick tune along his veins
He could not change by art,—
Had vowed his blood of brotherhood
To a stagnant place apart.

He did not vow in fear, or wrath,
Or grief's fantastic whim,
But, weights and shows of sensual things
Too closely crossing him,
On his soul's eyelid the pressure slid
And made its vision dim.

And darkening in the dark he strove
'Twixt earth and sea and sky
To lose in shadow, wave and cloud,
His brother's haunting cry :
The winds were welcome as they swept,
God's five-day work he would accept,
But let the rest go by.

He cried " O touching, patient Earth
That weepest in thy glee,
Whom God created very good,
And very mournful, we !
Thy voice of moan doth reach His throne,
As Abel's rose from thee.

" Poor crystal sky with stars astray !
Mad winds that howling go
From east to west ! perplex'd seas
That stagger from their blow !
O motion wild ! O wave defiled !
Our curse hath made you so.

" *We* ! and *our* curse ! do *I* partake
The desiccating sin ?
Have *I* the apple at my lips ?
The money-lust within ?
Do *I* human stand with the wounding hand,
To the blasting heart akin ?

" Thou solemn pathos of all things,
For solemn joy designed !

Behold, submissive to your cause,
An holy wrath I find
And, for your sake, the bondage break
That knits me to my kind.

"Hear me forswear man's sympathies,
His pleasant yea and no,
His riot on the piteous earth
Whereon his thistles grow,
His changing love—with stars above,
His pride—with graves below.

"Hear me forswear his roof by night,
His bread and salt by day,
His talkings at the wood-fire hearth,
His greetings by the way,
His answering looks, his systemed books,—
All man, for aye and aye.

"That so my purged, once human heart,
From all the human rent,
May gather strength to pledge and drink
Your wine of wonderment,
While you pardon me all blessingly
The woe mine Adam sent.

"And I shall feel your unseen looks
Innumerable, constant, deep
And soft as haunted Adam once,
Though sadder, round me creep,—
As slumbering men have mystic ken
Of watchers on their sleep.

"And ever, when I lift my brow
At evening to the sun,—
No voice of woman or of child
Recording 'Day is done,'—

Your silences shall a love express,
More deep than such an one."

PART THE SECOND.

SHOWING TO WHOM THE VOW WAS DECLARED.

THE poet's vow was inly sworn,
The poet's vow was told.
He shared among his crowding friends
The silver and the gold,
They clasping bland his gift,—his hand
In a somewhat slacker hold.

They wended forth, the crowding friends,
With farewells smooth and kind.
They wended forth, the solaced friends,
And left but twain behind :
One loved him true as brothers do,
And one was Rosalind.

He said, "My friends have wended forth
With farewells smooth and kind ;
Mine oldest friend, my plighted bride,
Ye need not stay behind :
Friend, wed my fair bride for my sake,
And let my lands ancestral make
A dower for Rosalind.

"And when beside your wassail board
Ye bless your social lot,
I charge you that the giver be
In all his gifts forgot,
Or alone of all his words recall
The last,—Lament me not."

She looked upon him silently
With her large, doubting eyes,

Like a child that never knew but love
Whom words of wrath surprise,
Till the rose did break from either cheek
And the sudden tears did rise.

She looked upon him mournfully,
While her large eyes were grown
Yet larger with the steady tears,
Till, all his purpose known,
She turn'd slow, as she would go—
The tears were shaken down.

She turn'd slow, as she would go,
Then quickly turned again,
And gazing in his face to seek
Some little touch of pain,
"I thought," she said,—but shook her head,—
She tried that speech in vain.

"I thought—but I am half a child
And very sage art thou—
The teachings of the heaven and earth
Should keep us soft and low.
They have drawn *my* tears in early years,
Or ere I wept—as now.

"But now that in thy face I read
Their cruel homily,
Before their beauty I would fain
Untouched, unsoftened be,—
If I indeed could look on even
The senseless, loveless earth and heaven
As thou canst look on me!

"And couldst thou as coldly view
Thy childhood's far abode,
Where little feet kept time with thine
Along the dewy sod,

And thy mother's look from holy book
Rose like a thought of God ?

" O brother,—called so, ere her last
Betrothing words were said !
O fellow-watcher in her room,
With hush'd voice and tread !
Rememberest thou how, hand in hand,
O friend, O lover, we did stand,
And knew that she was dead ?

" I will not live Sir Roland's bride,
That dower I will not hold ;
I tread, below my feet that go,
These parchments bought and sold :
The tears I weep, are mine to keep,
And worthier than thy gold."

The poet and Sir Roland stood
Alone, each turned to each,
Till Roland brake the silence left
By that soft-throbbing speech :
" Poor heart !" he cried, " it vainly tried
The distant heart to reach.

" And thou, O distant, sinful heart
That climbest up so high
To wrap and blind thee with the snows
That cause to dream and die,
What blessing can, from lips of man,
Approach thee with his sigh ?

" Ay, what from earth—create for man
And moaning in his moan ?
Ay, what from stars—revealed to man
And man-named one by one ?
Ay, more ! what blessing can be given

Where the Spirits seven do show in heaven
A MAN upon the throne?

"A man on earth HE wandered once,
All meek and undefiled,
And those who loved Him said 'He wept'—
None ever said He smiled;
Yet there might have been a smile unseen,
When He bowed His holy face, I ween,
To bless that happy child.

"And now HE pleadeth up in heaven
For our humanities,
Till the ruddy light on seraphs' wings
In pale emotion dies.
They can better bear their Godhead's glare
Than the pathos of His eyes.

"I will go pray our God to-day
To teach thee how to scan
His work divine, for human use
Since earth on axle ran,—
To teach thee to discern as plain
His grief divine, the blood-drop's stain
He left there, MAN for man.

"So, for the blood's sake shed by Him
Whom angels God declare,
Tears like it, moist and warm with love,
Thy reverent eyes shall wear
To see i' the face of Adam's race
The nature God doth share."

"I heard," the poet said, "thy voice
As dimly as thy breath:
The sound was like the noise of life
To one anear his death,—

Or of waves that fail to stir the pale
Sere leaf they roll beneath.

"And still between the sound and me
White creatures like a mist
Did interfloat confusedly,
Mysterious shapes unwist :
Across my heart and across my brow
I felt them droop like wreaths of snow,
To still the pulse they kist.

"The castle and its lands are thine—
The poor's—it shall be done.
Go, *man*, to love ! I go to live
In Courland hall, alone :
The bats along the ceilings cling,
The lizards in the floors do run,
And storms and years have worn and reft
The stain by human builders left
In working at the stone."

PART THE THIRD.

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS KEPT.

HE dwelt alone, and sun and moon
Were witness that he made
Rejection of his humanness
Until they seemed to fade ;
His face did so, for he did grow
Of his own soul afraid.

The self-poised God may dwell alone
With inward glorying,
But God's chief angel waiteth for
A brother's voice, to sing ;
And a lonely creature of sinful nature—
It is an awful thing.

An awful thing that feared itself ;
While many years did roll,
A lonely man, a feeble man,
A part beneath the whole,
He bore by day, he bore by night
That pressure of God's infinite
Upon his finite soul.

The poet at his lattice sate
And downward lookèd he.
Three Christians wended by to prayers,
With mute ones in their ee ;
Each turned above a face of love
And called him to the far chapèlle
With voice more tuneful than its bell :
But still they wended three.

There journeyed by a bridal pomp,
A bridegroom and his dame ;
He speaketh low for happiness,
She blusheth red for shame :
But never a tone of benison
From out the lattice came.

A little child with inward song,
No louder noise to dare,
Stood near the wall to see at play
The lizards green and rare—
Unblessed the while for his childish smile
Which cometh unaware.

PART THE FOURTH.

SHOWING HOW ROSALIND FARED BY THE KEEPING OF THE VOW.

In death-sheets lieth Rosalind
As white and still as they ;

And the old nurse that watched her bed
Rose up with "Well-a-day!"
And oped the casement to let in
The sun, and that sweet doubtful din
Which droppeth from the grass and bough
Sans wind and bird, none knoweth how—
To cheer her as she lay.

The old nurse started when she saw
Her sudden look of woe:
But the quick wan tremblings round her mouth
In a meek smile did go,
And calm she said, "When I am dead,
Dear nurse it shall be so.

"Till then, shut out those sights and sounds,
And pray God pardon me
That I without this pain no more
His blessed works can see!
And lean beside me, loving nurse,
That thou mayst hear, ere I am worse
What thy last love should be."

The loving nurse leant over her,
As white she lay beneath,—
The old eyes searching, dim with life,
The young ones dim with death,
To read their look if sound forsook
The trying, trembling breath.

"When all this feeble breath is done
And I on bier am laid,
My tresses smoothed for never a feast,
My body in shroud arrayed,
Uplift each palm in a saintly calm,
As if that still I prayed.

"And heap beneath mine head the flowers
You stoop so low to pull,

The little white flowers from the wood
Which grow there in the cool,
Which *he* and I, in childhood's games,
Went plucking, knowing not their names,
And filled thine apron full.

" Weep not ! *I* weep not. Death is strong,
The eyes of Death are dry !
But lay this scroll upon my breast
When hushed its heavings lie,
And wait awhile for the corpse's smile
Which shineth presently.

" And when it shineth, straightway call
Thy youngest children dear,
And bid them gently carry me
All barefaced on the bier ;
But bid them pass my kirkyard grass
That waveth long anear.

" And up the bank where I used to sit
And dream what life would be,
Along the brook with its sunny look
Akin to living glee,—
O'er the windy hill, through the forest still,
Let them gently carry me.

" And through the piny forest still,
And down the open moorland
Round where the sea beats mistily
And blindly on the foreland ;
And let them chant that hymn I know,
Bearing me soft, bearing me slow,
To the ancient hall of Courland.

" And when withal they near the hall,
In silence let them lay

My bier before the bolted door,
And leave it for a day :
For I have vowed, though I am proud,
To go there as a guest in shroud,
And not be turned away."

The old nurse looked within her eyes
Whose mutual look was gone ;
The old nurse stooped upon her mouth,
Whose answering voice was done ;
And nought she heard, till a little bird
Upon the casement's woodbine swinging
Broke out into a loud sweet singing
For joy o' the summer sun :
"Alack ! alack !" — she watched no more,
With head on knee she wail'd sore,
And the little bird sang o'er and o'er
For joy o' the summer sun.

PART THE FIFTH.

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS BROKEN.

THE poet oped his bolted door
The midnight sky to view ;
A spirit-feel was in the air
Which seemed to touch his spirit bare
Whenever his breath he drew ;
And the stars a liquid softness had,
As alone their holiness forbade
Their falling with the dew.

They shine upon the steadfast hills,
Upon the swinging tide,
Upon the narrow track of beach
And the murmuring pebbles pied :
They shine on every lovely place,

They shine upon the corpse's face,
As *it* were fair beside.

It lay before him, humanlike,
Yet so unlike a thing !
More awful in its shrouded pomp
Than any crown'd king :
All calm and cold, as it did hold
Some secret, glorying.

A heavier weight than of its clay
Clung to his heart and knee :
As if those folded palms could strike
He staggered groaningly,
And then o'erhung, without a groan, .
The meek close mouth that smiled alone,
Whose speech the scroll must be.

THE WORDS OF ROSALIND'S SCROLL.

" I LEFT thee last, a child at heart,
A woman scarce in years.
I come to thee, a solemn corpse
Which neither feels nor fears.
I have no breath to use in sighs ;
They laid the dead-weights on mine eyes
To seal them safe from tears.

" Look on me with thine own calm look :
I meet it calm as thou.
No look of thine can change *this* smile,
Or break thy sinful vow :
I tell thee that my poor scorned heart
Is of thine earth—thine earth, a part :
It cannot vex thee now.

" But out, alas ! these words are writ,
By a living, loving one

Adown whose cheeks, the proofs of life

The warm quick tears do run :

Ah, let the unloving corpse control

Thy scorn back from the loving soul

Whose place of rest is won !

" I have prayed for thee with bursting sobs,

When passion's course was free ;

I have prayed for thee with silent lips,

In the anguish none could see :

They whispered oft, 'She sleepeth soft'—

But I only prayed for thee.

" Go to! I pray for thee no more :

The corpse's tongue is still,

Its folded fingers point to heaven,

But point there stiff and chill :

No farther wrong, no farther woe

Hath license from the sin below

Its tranquil heart to thrill.

" I charge thee, by the living's prayer,

And the dead's silentness,

To wring from out thy soul a cry

Which God shall hear and bless !

Lest Heaven's own palm droop in my hand,

And pale among the saints I stand,

A saint companionless."

Bow lower down before the throne,

Triumphant Rosalind !

He boweth on thy corpse his face,

And weepeth as the blind :

'T was a dread sight to see them so,

For the senseless corpse rocked to and fro

With the wail of his living mind.

But dreader-sight, could such be seen,
His inward mind did lie,
Whose long-subjected humanness
Gave out its lion cry,
And fiercely rent its tenement
In a mortal agony.

I tell you, friends, had you heard his wail,
'T would haunt you in court and mart,
And in merry feast until you set
Your cup down to depart—
That weeping wild of a reckless child
From a proud man's broken heart.

O broken heart, O broken vow,
That wore so proud a feature !
God, grasping as a thunderbolt
The man's rejected nature,
Smote him therewith i' the presence high
Of his so worshipped earth and sky
That looked on all indifferently—
A wailing human creature.

A human creature found too weak
To bear his human pain—
(May Heaven's dear grace have spoken peace
To his dying heart and brain !)
For when they came at dawn of day
To lift the lady's corpse away,
Her bier was holding twain.

They dug beneath the kirkyard grass,
For both one dwelling deep ;
To which, when years had mossed the stone,
Sir Roland brought his little son
To watch the funeral heap.
And when the happy boy would rather
Turn upward his blithe eyes to see
The wood-doves nodding from the tree,

"Nay, boy, look downward," said his father,
 "Upon this human dust asleep :
 And hold it in thy constant ken
 That God's own unity compresses
 (One into one) the human many,
 And that his everlastingness is
 The bond which is not loosed by any :
 That thou and I this law must keep,
 If not in love, in sorrow then,—
 Though smiling not like other men,
 Still, like them we must weep."



A VISION OF POETS.

O Sacred Essence, lighting me this hour,
 How may I lightly stile thy great power?
Echo. Power.

Power ! but of whence ? under the greenwood spraye
 Or liv'st in Heaven ? saye.
Echo. In Heavens aye.
 In Heavens aye ! tell, may I it obtayne
 By alms, by fasting, prayer,—by paine ?
Echo. By paine.
 Show me the paine, it shall be undergone :
 I to mine end will still go on.
Echo. Go on.
Britannia's Pastorals.

A POET could not sleep aright,
 For his soul kept up too much light
 Under his eyelids for the night.
 And thus he rose disquieted
 With sweet rhymes ringing through his head,
 And in the forest wander'd
 Where, sloping up the darkest glades,
 The moon had drawn long colonnades
 Upon whose floor the verdure fades

To a faint silver, pavement fair
The antique wood-nymphs scarce would dare
To foot-print o'er, had such been there,—

Would rather sit by breathlessly,
With fear in their large eyes, to see
The consecrated sight. But HE

The poet who, with spirit-kiss
Familiar, had long claimed for his
Whatever earthly beauty is,

Who also in his spirit bore
A beauty passing the earth's store,
Walked calmly onward evermore.

His aimless thoughts in metre went,
Like a babe's hand without intent
Drawn down a seven-stringed instrument :

Nor jarred it with his humour as,
With a faint stirring of the grass,
An apparition fair did pass.

He might have feared, another time,
But all things fair and strange did chime
With his thoughts then, as rhyme to rhyme.

An angel had not startled him,
Alighted from heaven's burning rim
To breathe from glory in the Dim ;

Much less a lady riding slow
Upon a palfrey white as snow,
And smooth as a snow-cloud could go.

Full upon his she turned her face,
“ What ho, sir poet ! dost thou pace
Our woods at night in ghostly chace

"Of some fair Dryad of old tales
Who chants between the nightingales
And over sleep by song prevails?"

She smiled ; but he could see arise
Her soul from far adown her eyes,
Prepared as if for sacrifice.

She looked a queen who seemeth gay
From royal grace alone. "Now, nay,"
He answered, "slumber passed away,

"Compelled by instincts in my head
That I should see to-night, instead
Of a fair nymph, some fairer Dread."

She looked up quickly to the sky
And spake : "The moon's regality
Will hear no praise ; she is as I.

"She is in heaven, and I on earth ;
This is my kingdom : I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth."

He brake in with a voice that mourned ;
"To their worth, lady? They are scorned
By men they sing for, till inurned.

"To their worth? Beauty in the mind
Leaves the hearth cold, and love-refined
Ambitions make the world unkind.

"The boor who ploughs the daisy down,
The chief whose mortgage of renown,
Fixed upon graves, has bought a crown—

"Both these are happier, more approved
Than poets !—why should I be moved
In saying, both are more beloved?"

"The south can judge not of the north,"
She resumed calmly; "I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.

"Yea, verily, to anoint them all
With blessed oils which surely shall
Smell sweeter as the ages fall."

"As sweet," the poet said, and rung
A low sad laugh, "as flowers are, sprung
Out of their graves when they die young."

"As sweet as window-eglantine,
Some bough of which, as they decline,
The hired nurse gathers at their sign:

"As sweet, in short, as perfumed shroud
Which the gay Roman maidens sewed
For English Keats, singing aloud."

The lady answered, "Yea, as sweet!
The things thou namest being complete
In fragrance, as I measure it.

"Since sweet the death-clothes and the knell
Of him who having lived, dies well;
And wholly sweet the asphodel

"Stirred softly by that foot of his,
When he treads brave on all that is,
Into the world of souls, from this.

"Since sweet the tears, dropped at the door
Of tearless Death, and even before:
Sweet, consecrated evermore.

"What, dost thou judge it a strange thing
That poets, crowned for vanquishing,
Should bear some dust from out the ring?"

‘Come on with me, come on with me,
And learn in coming : let me free
Thy spirit into verity.”

She ceased : her palfrey’s paces sent
No separate noises as she went ;
’T was a bee’s hum, a little spent.

And while the poet seemed to tread
Along the drowy noise so made,
The forest heaved up overhead

Its billowy foliage through the air,
And the calm stars did far and spare
O’erswim the masses everywhere

Save when the overtopping pines
Did bar their tremulous light with lines
All fixed and black. Now the moon shines

A broader glory. You may see
The trees grow rarer presently ;
The air blows up more fresh and free :

Until they come from dark to light,
And from the forest to the sight
Of the large heaven-heart, bare with night,

A fiery throb in every star
Those burning arteries that are
The conduits of God’s life afar.

A wild brown moorland underneath,
And four pools breaking up the heath
With white low gleamings, blank as death.

Beside the first pool, near the wood,
A dead tree in set horror stood,
Peeled and disjointed, stark as rood ;

Since thunder-stricken, years ago,
Fixed in the spectral train and throe
Wherewith it struggled from the blow :

A monumental tree, alone,
That will not bend in storms, nor groan,
But break off sudden like a stone.

Its lifeless shadow lies oblique
Upon the pool where, javelin-like,
The star-rays quiver while they strike.

" Drink," said the lady, very still—
" Be holy and cold." He did her will
And drank the starry water chill.

The next pool they came near unto
Was bare of trees ; there, only grew
Straight flags, and lilies just a few

Which sullen on the water sate
And leant their faces on the flat,
As weary of the starlight-state.

" Drink," said the lady, grave and slow—
" *World's use* behoveth thee to know."
He drank the bitter wave below.

The third pool, girt with thorny bushes
And flaunting weeds and reeds and rushes
That winds sang through in mournful gushes,

Was whitely smeared in many a round
By a slow slime ; the starlight swound
Over the ghastly light it found.

" Drink," said the lady, sad and slow—
" *World's love* behoveth thee to know."
He looked to her commanding so ;

Her brow was troubled but her eye
Struck clear to his soul. For all reply
He drank the water suddenly :

Then, with a deathly sickness, passed
Beside the fourth pool and the last,
Where weights of shadow were downcast

From yew and alder and rank trails
Of nightshade clasping the trunk-scales
And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew : who dares to stoop
Where those dank branches overdroop,
Into his heart the chill strikes up,

He hears a silent gliding coil,
The snakes strain hard against the soil,
His foot slips in their slimy oil,

And toads seem crawling on his hand,
And clinging bats but dimly scanned
Full in his face their wings expand.

A paleness took the poet's cheek :
" Must I drink *here?*" he seemed to seek
The lady's will with utterance meek :

" Ay, ay," she said, " it so must be ;"
(And this time she spake cheerfully)
" Behoves thee know *World's cruelty.*"

He bowed his forehead till his mouth
Curved in the wave, and drank unloth
As if from rivers of the south ;

His lips sobbed through the water rank,
His heart paused in him while he drank,
His brain beat heart-like, rose and sank,

And he swooned backward to a dream
Wherein he lay 'twixt gloom and gleam,
With death and life at each extreme :

And spiritual thunders, born of soul
Not cloud, did leap from mystic pole
And o'er him roll and counter-roll,

Crushing their echoes reboant
With their own wheels. Did Heaven so grant
His spirit a sign of covenant ?

At last came silence. A slow kiss
Did crown his forehead after this ;
His eyelids flew back for the bliss—

The lady stood beside his head,
Smiling a thought, with hair dispread ;
The moonshine seemed dishevellèd

In her sleek tresses manifold
Like Danae's in the rain of old
That dripped with melancholy gold :

But SHE was holy, pale and high
As one who saw an ecstasy
Beyond a foretold agony.

"Rise up !" said she with voice where song
Eddied through speech, "rise up ; be strong :
And learn how right avenges wrong."

The poet rose up on his feet :
He stood before an altar set
For sacrament with vessels meet

And mystic altar-lights which shine
As if their flames were crystalline
Carved flames that would not shrink or pine.

The altar filled the central place
Of a great church, and toward its face
Long aisles did shoot and interlace

And from it a continuous mist
Of incense (round the edges kissed
By a yellow light of amethyst)

Wound upward slowly and throbbingly,
Cloud within cloud, right silverly,
Cloud above cloud, victoriously,—

Broke full against the archèd roof
And thence refracting eddied off
And floated through the marble woof

Of many a fine-wrought architrave,
Then, poising its white masses brave,
Swept solemnly down aisle and nave

Where now in dark and now in light
The countless columns, glimmering white,
Seemed leading out to the Infinite :

Plunged halfway up the shaft they showed,
In that pale shifting incense-cloud
Which flowed them by and overflowed

Till mist and marble seemed to blend
And the whole temple, at the end,
With its own incense to distend,—

The arches like a giant's bow
To bend and slacken,—and below,
The nichèd saints to come and go :

Alone amid the shifting scene
That central altar stood serene
In its clear steadfast taper-sheen.

Then first, the poet was aware
Of a chief angel standing there
Before that altar, in the glare.

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw
That *they* saw God ; his lips and jaw
Grand-made and strong, as Sinai's law

They could enunciate and refrain
From vibratory after-pain,
And his brow's height was sovereign.

On the vast background of his wings
Rises his image, and he flings
From each plumed arc pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth more
Or less, the angel-heart) before
And round him upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes,
While at his side 'twixt lights and glooms
The phantasm of an organ booms.

Extending from which instrument
And angel, right and left-way bent,
The poet's sight grew sentient

Of a strange company around
And toward the altar ; pale and bound
With bay above the eyes profound.

Deathful their faces were, and yet
The power of life was in them set—
Never forgot nor to forget :

Sublime significance of mouth,
Dilated nostril full of youth,
And forehead royal with the truth.

These faces were not multiplied
Beyond your count, but side by side
Did front the altar, glorified,

Still as a vision, yet exprest
Full as an action—look and geste
Of buried saint in risen rest.

The poet knew them. Faint and dim
His spirits seemed to sink in him—
Then, like a dolphin, change-and swim

The current : these were poets true,
Who died for Beauty as martyrs do
For Truth—the ends being scarcely two.

God's prophets of the Beautiful
These poets were ; of iron rule,
The rugged cilix, serge of wool.

Here Homer, with the broad suspense
Of thunderous brows, and lips intense
Of garrulous god-innocence.

There Shakespeare, on whose forehead climb
The crowns o' the world : O eyes sublime
With tears and laughters for all time !

Here Æschylus, the women swooned
To see so awful when he frowned
As the gods did : he standeth crowned.

Euripides, with close and mild
Scholastic lips, that could be wild
And laugh or sob out like a child

Even in the classes. Sophocles,
With that king's-look wherewith down the trees
Followed the dark effigies

•

Of the lost Theban. Hesiod old,
Who, somewhat blind and deaf and cold,
Cared most for gods and bulls. And bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,
With race-dust on his cheeks, and clear
Slant startled eyes that seem to hear

The chariot rounding the last goal,
To hurtle past it in his soul.
And Sappho, with that gloriote

Of ebon hair on calméd brows—
O poet-woman ! none foregoes
The leap, attaining the repose.

Theocritus, with glittering locks
Dropt sideways, as betwixt the rocks
He watched the visionary flocks.

And Aristophanes, who took
The world with mirth, and laughter-struck
The hollow caves of Thought and woke

The infinite echoes hid in each.
And Virgil : shade of Mantuan beech
Did help the shade of bay to reach

And knit around his forehead high ;
For his gods wore less majesty
Than his brown bees hummed deathlessly.

Lucretius, nobler than his mood,
Who dropped his plummet down the broad
Deep universe and said "No God—"

Finding no bottom : he denied
Divinely the divine, and died
Chief poet on the Tiber-side

By grace of God : his face is stern
As one compelled, in spite of scorn,
To teach a truth he would not learn.

And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed ;
Once counted greater than the rest,
When mountain-winds blew out his vest.

And Spenser drooped his dreaming head
(With languid sleep-smile you had said
From his own verse engendered)

On Ariosto's, till they ran
Their curls in one : the Italian
Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids. And Dante stern
And sweet, whose spirit was an urn
For wine and milk poured out in turn.

Hard-souled Alfieri ; and fancy-willed
Boiardo, who with laughter filled
The pauses of the jostled shield.

And Berni, with a hand stretched out
To sleek that storm And, not without
The wreath he died in and the doubt

He died by, Tasso, bard and lover,
Whose visions were too thin to cover
The face of a false woman over.

And soft Racine ; and grave Corneille,
The orator of rhymes, whose wail
Scarce shook his purple. And Petrarch pale,

From whose brainlighted heart were thrown
A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,
Each lucid with the name of One.

And Camoens, with that look he had,
Compelling India's Genius sad
From the wave through the Lusiad,—

The murmurs of the storm-cape ocean
Indrawn in vibrative emotion
Along the verse. And, while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone
Under the tonsure blown upon
By airs celestial, Calderon.

And bold De Vega, who breathed quick
Verse after verse, till death's old trick
Put pause to life and rhetoric.

And Goethe, with that reaching eye
His soul reached out from, far and high,
And fell from inner entity.

And Schiller, with heroic front
Worthy of Plutarch's kiss upon 't,
Too large for wreath of modern wont.

And Chaucer, with his infantine
Familiar clasp of things divine ;
That mark upon his lip is wine.

Here, Milton's eyes strike piercing-dim :
The shapes of suns and stars did swim
Like clouds from them, and granted him

God for sole vision. Cowley, there,
Whose active fancy debonair
Drew straws like amber—foul to fair.

Drayton and Browne, with smiles they drew
From outward nature, still kept new
From their own inward nature true.

•

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher, Ben,
Whose fire-hearts sowed our furrows when
The world was worthy of such men.

And Burns, with pungent passionings
Set in his eyes : deep lyric springs
Are of the fire-mount's issuings.

And Shelley, in his white ideal,
All statue-blind. And Keats the real
Adonis with the hymeneal

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between
His youthful curls, kissed straight and sheen
In his Rome-grave, by Venus queen.

And poor, proud Byron, sad as grave
And salt as life ; forlornly brave,
And quivering with the dart he drave.

And visionary Coleridge, who
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do
Their wings with cadence up the Blue.

These poets faced (and many more)
The lighted altar looming o'er
The clouds of incense dim and hoar :

All their faces, in the lull
Of natural things, looked wonderful
With life and death and deathless rule.

All, still as stone and yet intense ;
As if by spirit's vehemence
That stone were carved and not by sense.

But where the heart of each should beat,
There seemed a wound instead of it,
From whence the blood dropped to their feet

Drop after drop—dropped heavily
As century follows century
Into the deep eternity.

Then said the lady—and her word
Came distant, as wide waves were stirred
Between her and the ear that heard,

“ *World's use* is cold, *world's love* is vain,
World's cruelty is bitter bane,
But pain is not the fruit of pain.

“ Harken, O poet, whom I led
From the dark wood : dismissing dread,
Now hear this angel in my stead.

“ His organ's clavier strikes along
These poets' hearts, sonorous, strong,
They gave him without count of wrong,—

“ A diapason whence to guide
Up to God's feet, from these who died,
An anthem fully glorified—

“ Whereat God's blessing, IBARAK (יְבָרַךְ)
Breathes back this music, folds it back
About the earth in vapoury rack,

“ And men walk in it, crying, ‘ Lo
The world is wider, and we know
The very heavens look brighter so :

“ ‘ The stars move statelier round the edge
Of the silver spheres, and give in pledge
Their light for nobler privilege :

“ ‘ No little flower but joys or grieves,
Full life is rustling in the sheaves,
Full spirit sweeps the forest-leaves.’

" So works this music on the earth,
God so admits it, sends it forth.
To add another worth to worth—

" A new creation-bloom that rounds
The old creation and expounds
His Beautiful in tuneful sounds.

" Now harken ! " Then the poet gazed
Upon the angel glorious-faced
Whose hand, majestically raised,

Floated across the organ-keys,
Like a pale moon o'er murmuring seas,
With no touch but with influences :

Then rose and fell (with swell and swound
Of shapeless noises wandering round
A concord which at last they found)

Those mystic keys : the tones were mixed,
Dim, faint, and thrilled and throbb'd betwixt
The incomplete and the unfixed :

And therein mighty minds were heard
In mighty musings, inly stirred,
And struggling outward for a word :

Until these surges, having run
This way and that, gave out as one
An Aphrodite of sweet tune,

A Harmony that, finding vent,
Upward in grand ascension went,
Winged to a heavenly argument,

Up, upward like a saint who strips
The shroud back from his eyes and lips,
And rises in apocalypse :

A harmony sublime and plain,
Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,—
Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those undertones
Of perplexed chords, and soared at once
And struck out from the starry thrones

Their several silver octaves as
It passed to God. The music was
Of divine stature ; strong to pass :

And those who heard it, understood
Something of life in spirit and blood,
Something of nature's fair and good.

And while it sounded, those great souls
Did thrill as racers at the goals
And burn in all their aureoles ;

But she the lady, as vapour-bound,
Stood calmly in the joy of sound,
Like Nature with the showers around.

And when it ceased, the blood which fell
Again, alone grew audible,
Tolling the silence as a bell.

The sovran angel lifted high
His hand, and spake out sovranly :
“ Tried poets, harken and reply !

“ Give me true answers. If we grant
That not to suffer, is to want
The conscience of the jubilant,—

“ If ignorance of anguish is
But ignorance, and mortals miss
Far prospects, by a level bliss—

" If, as two colours must be viewed
In a visible image, mortals should
Need good and evil, to see good—

" If to speak nobly, comprehends
To feel profoundly—if the ends
Of power and suffering, Nature blends—

" If poets on the tripod must
Writhe like the Pythian to make just
Their oracles and merit trust—

" If every vatic word that sweeps
To change the world must pale their lips
And leave their own souls in eclipse,—

" If to search deep the universe
Must pierce the searcher with the curse,
Because that bolt (in man's reverse)

" Was shot to the heart o' the wood and lies
Wedged deepest in the best,—if eyes
That look for visions and surprise

" From influent angels, must shut down
Their eyelids first to sun and moon,
The head asleep upon a stone,—

" If ONE who did redeem you back,
By His own loss, from final wrack,
Did consecrate by touch and track

" Those temporal sorrows till the taste
Of brackish waters of the waste
Is salt with tears He dropt too fast,—

" If all the crowns of earth must wound
With prickings of the thorns He found,—
If saddest sighs swell sweetest sound,—

"What say ye unto this?—refuse
This baptism in salt water?—choose
Calm breasts, mute lips, and labour loose?

"Or, O ye gifted givers! ye
Who give your liberal hearts to me
To make the world this harmony,

"Are ye resigned that they be spent
To such world's help?"

The Spirits bent

Their awful brows, and said, "Content."

Content! it sounded like *amen*
Said by a choir of mourning men;
An affirmation full of pain

And patience—ay, of glorying
And adoration, as a king
Might seal an oath for governing.

Then said the angel—and his face
Lightened abroad until the place
Grew larger for a moment's space,—

The long aisles flashing out in light,
And nave and transept, columns white
And arches crossed, being clear to sight

As if the roof were off and all
Stood in the noon-sun,—“Lo, I call
To other hearts as liberal.

"This pedal strikes out in the air:
My instrument has room to bear
Still fuller strains and perfecter.

"Herein is room, and shall be room
While Time lasts, for new hearts to come
Consummating while they consume.

“ What living man will bring a gift
Of his own heart and help to lift
The tune ?— The race is to the swift.”

So asked the angel. Straight the while,
A company came up the aisle
With measured step and sorted smile ;

Cleaving the incense-clouds that rise,
With winking unaccustomed eyes
And love-locks smelling sweet of spice.

One bore his head above the rest
As if the world were dispossessed,
And one did pillow chin on breast,

Right languid, an as he should faint ;
One shook his curls across his paint,
And moralized on worldly taint ;

One, slanting up his face, did wink
The salt rheum to the eyelid's brink,
To think—O gods ! or—not to think.

Some trod out stealthily and slow,
As if the sun would fall in snow
If they walked to instead of fro ;

And some, with conscious ambling free,
Did shake their bells right daintily
On hand and foot, for harmony ;

And some, composing sudden sighs
In attitudes of point-device,
Rehearsed impromptu agonies.

And when this company drew near
The spirits crowned, it might appear
Submitted to a ghastly fear ;

As a sane eye in master-passion
Constrains a maniac to the fashion
Of hideous maniac imitation

In the least geste—the dropping low
O' the lid, the wrinkling of the brow,
Exaggerate with mock and mow—

So mastered was that company
By the crowned vision utterly,
Swayed to a maniac mockery.

One dulled his eyeballs, as they ached
With Homer's forehead, though he lacked
An inch of any ; and one racked

His lower lip with restless tooth,
As Pindar's rushing words forsooth
Were pent behind it ; one his smooth

Pink cheeks, did rumple passionate
Like Æschylus, and tried to prate
On trolling tongue of fate and fate ;

One set her eyes like Sappho's—or
Any light woman's ; one forbore
Like Dante, or any man as poor

In mirth, to let a smile undo
His hard-shut lips ; and one that drew
Sour humours from his mother, blew

His sunken cheeks out to the size
Of most unnatural jollities,
Because Anacreon looked jest-wise ;

So with the rest : it was a sight
A great world-laughter would requite,
Or great world-wrath, with equal right.

Out came a speaker from that crowd
To speak for all, in sleek and proud
Exordial periods, while he bowed

His knee before the angel—"Thus,
O angel who hast called for us,
We bring thee service emulous,

"Fit service from sufficient soul,
Hand-service to receive world's dole,
Lip-service in world's ear to roll

"Adjusted concords soft enow
To hear the wine-cups passing, through,
And not too grave to spoil the show :

"Thou, certes, when thou askest more,
O sapient angel, leanest o'er
The window-sill of metaphor.

"To give our hearts up? fie! that rage
Barbaric antedates the age;
It is not done on any stage.

"Because your scald or gleeman went
With seven or nine-stringed instrument
Upon his back,—must ours be bent?

"We are not pilgrims, by your leave;
No, nor yet martyrs; if we grieve,
It is to rhyme to—summer eve :

"And if we labour, it shall be
As suiteth best with our degree,
In after-dinner reverie."

More yet that speaker would have said,
Poising between his smiles fair-fed
Each separate phrase till finish'd ;

But all the foreheads of those born
And dead true poets flashed with scorn
Betwixt the bay leaves round them worn,

Ay, jetted such brave fire that they,
The new-come, shrank and paled away
Like leaden ashes when the day

Strikes on the hearth. A spirit-blast,
A presence known by power, at last
Took them up mutely : they had passed

And he our pilgrim-poet saw
Only their places, in deep awe,
What time the angel's smile did draw

His gazing upward. Smiling on,
The angel in the angel shone,
Revealing glory in benison ;

Till, ripened in the light which shut
The poet in, his spirit mute
Dropped sudden as a perfect fruit.

He fell before the angel's feet,
Saying, " If what is true is sweet,
In something I may compass it :

" For, where my worthiness is poor,
My will stands richly at the door
To pay shortcomings evermore.

" Accept me therefore : not for price
And not for pride my sacrifice
Is tendered, for my soul is nice

" And will beat down those dusty seeds
Of bearded corn if she succeeds
In soaring while the covey feeds.

" I soar, I am drawn up like the lark
To its white cloud : so high my mark,
Albeit my wing is small and dark.

" I ask no wages, seek no fame :
Sew me, for shroud round face and name,
God's banner of the oriflamme.

" I only would have leave to loose
(In tears and blood if so He choose)
Mine inward music out to use ;

" I only would be spent—in pain
And loss, perchance, but not in vain—
Upon the sweetness of that strain ;

" Only project beyond the bound
Of mine own life, so lost and found,
My voice and live on in its sound ;

" Only embrace and be embraced
By fiery ends, whereby to waste,
And light God's future with my past."

The angel's smile grew more divine,
The mortal speaking ; ay, its shine
Swelled fuller, like a choir-note fine,

Till the broad glory round his brow
Did vibrate with the light below ;
But what he said, I do not know.

Nor know I if the man who prayed,
Rose up accepted, unforbade,
From the church-floor where he was laid ;

Nor if a listening life did run
Through the king-poets, one by one
Rejoicing in a worthy son :

My soul, which might have seen, grew blind
By what it looked on : I can find
No certain count of things behind.

I saw alone, dim, white and grand
As in a dream, the angel's hand
Stretched forth in gesture of command

Straight through the haze. And so, as erst,
A strain more noble than the first
Mused in the organ, and outburst :

With giant march from floor to roof
Rose the full notes, now parted off
In pauses massively aloof

Like measured thunders, now rejoined
In concords of mysterious kind
Which fused together sense and mind,

Now flashing sharp on sharp along
Exultant in a mounting throng,
Now dying off to a low song

Fed upon minors, wavelike sounds
Re-eddying into silver rounds,
Enlarging liberty with bounds :

And every rhythm that seemed to close
Survived in confluent underflows
Symphonious with the next that rose.

Thus the whole strain being multiplied
And greatened, with its glorified
Wings shot abroad from side to side,

Waved backward (as a wind might wave
A Brocken mist and with as brave
Wild roaring) arch and architrave,

Aisle, transept, column, marble wall,—
Then swelling outward, prodigal
Of aspiration beyond thrall,

Soared, and drew up with it the whole
Of this said vision, as a soul
Is raised by a thought. And as a scroll

Of bright devices is unrolled
Still upward with a gradual gold,
So rose the vision manifold,

Angel and organ, and the round
Of spirits, solemnized and crowned ;
While the freed clouds of incense wound

• Ascending, following in their track,
And glimmering faintly like the rack
O' the moon in her own light cast back.

And as that solemn dream withdrew,
The lady's kiss did fall anew
Cold on the poet's brow as dew.

And that same kiss which bound him first
Beyond the senses, now reversed
Its own law and most subtly pierced

His spirit with the sense of things
Sensual and present. Vanishings
Of glory with Æolian wings

Struck him and passed : the lady's face
Did melt back in the chrysopras
Of the orient morning sky that was

Yet clear of lark, and there and so
She melted as a star might do,
Still smiling as she melted slow :

Smiling so slow, he seemed to see
Her smile the last thing, gloriously
Beyond her, far as memory.

Then he looked round : he was alone.
He lay before the breaking sun,
As Jacob at the Bethel stone.

And thought's entangled skein being wound,
He knew the moorland of his swound,
And the pale pools that smeared the ground ;

The far wood-pines like offing ships ;
The fourth pool's yew anear him drips,
World's cruelty attaints his lips,

And still he tastes it, bitter still ;
Through all that glorious possible
He had the sight of present ill.

Yet rising calmly up and slowly
With such a cheer as scorneth folly,
A mild delightsome melancholy,

He journeyed homeward through the wood
And prayed along the solitude
Betwixt the pines, " O God, my God ! "

The golden morning's open flowings
Did sway the trees to murmurous bowings,
In metric chant of blessed poems.

And passing homeward through the wood
He prayed along the solitude,
" THOU, Poet-God, art great and good !

" And though we must have, and have had
Right reason to be earthly sad,
THOU, Poet-God, are great and glad ! "

CONCLUSION.

Life treads on life, and heart on heart ,
We press too close in church and mart
To keep a dream or grave apart :

And I was 'ware of walking down
That same green forest where had gone
The poet-pilgrim. One by one

I traced his footsteps. From the east
A red and tender radiance pressed
Through the near trees, until I guessed

The sun behind shone full and round ;
While up the leafiness profound
A wind scarce old enough for sound

Stood ready to blow on me when
I turned that way, and now and then
The birds sang and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry
Of the dew sliding droppingly
From the leaf-edges and apply

Back to their song : 'twixt dew and bird
So sweet a silence ministered,
God seemed to use it for a word :

Yet morning souls did leap and run
In all things, as the least had won
A joyous insight of the sun,

And no one looking round the wood
Could help confessing as he stood,
This Poet-God is glad and good.

But hark ! a distant sound that grows,
A heaving, sinking of the boughs,
A rustling murmur, not of those,

A breezy noise which is not breeze !
And white-clad children by degrees
Steal out in troops among the trees,

Fair little children morning-bright,
With faces grave yet soft to sight,
Expressive of restrained delight.

Some plucked the palm-boughs within reach,
And others leapt up high to catch
The upper boughs and shake from each

A rain of dew till, wetted so,
The child who held the branch let go
And it swang backward with a flow

Of faster drippings. Then I knew
The children laughed ; but the laugh flew
From its own chirrup as might do

A frightened song-bird ; and a child
Who seemed the chief said very mild
“ Hush ! keep this morning undefiled.”

His eyes rebuked them from calm spheres;
His soul upon his brow appears
In waiting for more holy years.

I called the child to me, and said,
“ What are your palms for ? ” “ To be spread ”
He answered, “ on a poet dead.

“ The poet died last month, and now
The world which had been somewhat slow
In honouring his living brow,

"Commands the palms ; they must be strown
On his new marble very soon,
In a procession of the town."

I sighed and said, " Did he foresee
Any such honour ? " " Verily
I cannot tell you," answered he.

" But this I know, I fain would lay
My own head down, another day,
As *he* did,—with the fame away.

" A lily, a friend's hand had plucked,
Lay by his death-bed, which he looked
As deep down as a bee had sucked,

" Then, turning to the lattice, gazed
O'er hill and river and upraised
His eyes illumined and amazed

" With the world's beauty, up to God,
Re-offering on their iris broad
The images of things bestowed

" By the chief Poet. ' God ! ' he cried,
' Be praised for anguish which has tried,
For beauty which has satisfied :

" ' For this world's presence half within
And half without me—thought and scene—
This sense of Being and Having been.

" ' I thank Thee that my soul hath room
For Thy grand world : both guests may come—
Beauty, to soul—Body, to tomb.

" ' I am content to be so weak :
Put strength into the words I speak,
And I am strong in what I seek.

“ ‘ I am content to be so bare
Before the archers, everywhere
My wounds being stroked by heavenly air.

“ ‘ I laid my soul before Thy feet
That images of fair and sweet
Should walk to other men on it.

“ ‘ I am content to feel the step
Of each pure image : let those keep
To mandragore who care to sleep.

“ ‘ I am content to touch the brink
Of the other goblet, and I think
My bitter drink a wholesome drink.

“ ‘ Because my portion was assigned
Wholesome and bitter, Thou art kind,
And I am blessed to my mind.

“ ‘ Gifted for giving, I receive
The maythorn and its scent outgive :
I grieve not that I once did grieve.

“ ‘ In my large joy of sight and touch
Beyond what others count for such,
I am content to suffer much.

“ ‘ *I know*—is all the mourner saith,
Knowledge by suffering entereth,
And Life is perfected by Death.’ ”

The child spake nobly : strange to hear,
His infantine soft accents clear
Charged with high meanings, did appear ;

And fair to see, his form and face
Winged out with whiteness and pure grace
From the green darkness of the place.

Behind his head a palm-tree grew ;
An orient beam which pierced it through
Transversely on his forehead drew

The figure of a palm-branch brown
Traced on its brightness up and down
In fine fair lines,—a shadow-crown :

Guido might paint his angels so—
A little angel, taught to go
With holy words to saints below—

Such innocence of action yet
Significance of object met
In his whole bearing strong and sweet.

And all the children, the whole band,
Did round in rosy reverence stand,
Each with a palm-bough in his hand.

"And so he died," I whispered. "Nay,
Not so," the childish voice did say,
"That poet turned him first to pray

"In silence, and God heard the rest
'Twixt the sun's footsteps down the west.
Then he called one who loved him best,

"Yea, he called softly through the room
(His voice was weak yet tender)—'Come,'
He said, 'come nearer ! Let the bloom

"Of Life grow over, undenied,
This bridge of Death, which is not wide—
I shall be soon at the other side.

"Come, kiss me !' So the one in truth
Who loved him best,—in love, not ruth,
Bowed down and kissed him mouth to mouth :

"And in that kiss of love was won
Life's manumission. All was done :
The mouth that kissed last, kissed *alone*.

"But in the former, confluent kiss,
The same was sealed, I think, by His,
To words of truth and uprightness."

The child's voice trembled, his lips shook
Like a rose leaning o'er a brook,
Which vibrates though it is not struck.

"And who," I asked, a little moved
Yet curious-eyed, "was this that loved
And kissed him last, as it behoved?"

"I," softly said the child ; and then,
"I," said he louder, once again :
"His son, my rank is among men :

"And now that men exalt his name
I come to gather palms with them,
That holy love may hallow fame.

"He did not die alone, nor should
His memory live so, 'mid these rude
World-praisers—a worse solitude.

"Me, a voice calleth to that tomb
Where these are strewing branch and bloom,
Saying, 'Come nearer : ' and I come.

"Glory to God !" resum'd he,
And his eyes smiled for victory
O'er their own tears which I could see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek and chin—
"That poet now has entered in
The place of rest which is not sin.

"And while he rests, his songs in troops
Walk up and down our earthly slopes,
Companioned by diviner hopes."

"But *thou*," I murmured to engage
The child's speech farther—"hast an age
Too tender for this orphanage."

"Glory to God—to God !" he saith,
"KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING ENTERETH,
AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH."



INSUFFICIENCY.

WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse
Some inward thought, my soul throbs audibly
Along my pulses, yearning to be free
And something farther, fuller, higher, rehearse,
To the individual, true, and the universe,
In consummation of right harmony :
But, like a wind-exposed distorted tree,
We are blown against for ever by the curse
Which breathes through nature. Oh, the world is weak,
The effluence of each is false to all,
And what we best conceive we fail to speak.
Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments fall,
And then resume thy broken strains, and seek
Fit peroration without let or thrall.



TWO SKETCHES.

I

H. B.

THE shadow of her face upon the wall
May take your memory to the perfect Greek,
But when you front her, you would call the cheek
Too full, sir, for your models, if withal
That bloom it wears could leave you critical,
And that smile reaching toward the rosy streak ;
For one who smiles so, has no need to speak
To lead your thoughts along, as steed to stall.
A smile that turns the sunny side o' the heart
On all the world, as if herself did win
By what she lavished on an open mart !
Let no man call the liberal sweetness, sin,—
For friends may whisper as they stand apart,
“ Methinks there 's still some warmer place within.”

II

A. B.

HER azure eyes, dark lashes hold in fee ;
Her fair superfluous ringlets without check
Drop after one another down her neck,
As many to each cheek as you might see
Green leaves to a wild rose ; this sign outwardly,
And a like woman-covering seems to deck
Her inner nature, for she will not fleck
World's sunshine with a finger. Sympathy
Must call her in Love's name ! and then, I know,
She rises up, and brightens as she should,
And lights her smile for comfort, and is slow
In nothing of high-hearted fortitude.
To smell this flower, come near it ! such can grow
In that sole garden where Christ's brow dropped blood.

MOUNTAINEER AND POET.

THE simple goatherd between Alp and sky,
Seeing his shadow, in that awful tryst,
Dilated to a giant's on the mist,
Esteems not his own stature larger by
The apparent image, but more patiently
Strikes his staff down beneath his clenching fist,
While the snow-mountains lift their amethyst
And sapphire crowns of splendour, far and nigh,
Into the air around him. Learn from hence
Meek morals, all ye poets that pursue
Your way still onward up to eminence !
Ye are not great because creation drew
Large revelations round your earliest sense,
Nor bright because God's glory shines for you.

FELICIA HEMANS.

TO L. E. L., REFERRING TO HER MONODY ON THE POETESS.

THOU bay-crowned living One that o'er the bay-crowned
Dead art bowing,
And o'er the shadeless moveless brow the vital shadow
throwing,
And o'er the sighless songless lips the wail and music
wedding,
And dropping o'er the tranquil eyes the tears not of their
shedding !—

Take music from the silent Dead whose meaning is
completer,
Reserve thy tears for living brows where all such tears
are meeter,

And leave the violets in the grass to brighten where thou treadest :

No flowers for her ! no need of flowers, albeit "bring flowers," thou saidest.

Yes, flowers, to crown the "cup and lute," since both may come to breaking,

Or flowers, to greet the "bride"—the heart's own beating works its aching ;

Or flowers, to soothe the "captive's" sight, from earth's free bosom gathered,

Reminding of his earthly hope, then withering as it withered :

But bring not near the solemn corse a type of human seeming,

Lay only dust's stern verity upon the dust undreaming :

And while the calm perpetual stars shall look upon it solely,

Her spher'd soul shall look on *them* with eyes more bright and holy.

Nor mourn, O living One, because her part in life was mourning :

Would she have lost the poet's fire for anguish of the burning ?

The minstrel harp, for the strained string ? the tripod, for the afflated

Woe ? or the vision, for those tears in which it shone dilated ?

Perhaps she shuddered while the world's cold hand her brow was wreathing,

But never wronged that mystic breath which breathed in all her breathing,

Which drew from rocky earth and man, abstractions high and moving,

Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love, if not the loving.

Such visionings have paled in sight ; the Saviour she
 descrieth,
 And little recks *who* wreathed the brow which on His
 bosom lieth:
 The whiteness of His innocence o'er all her garments
 flowing,
 There learneth she the sweet "new song" she will not
 mourn in knowing.

Be happy, crowned and living One ! and as thy dust
 decayeth
 May thine own England say for thee what now for Her
 it sayeth—
 "Albeit softly in our ears her silver song was ringing,
 The foot-fall of her parting soul is softer than her
 singing."



L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION.

"Do you think of me as I think of you?"

From her poem written during the voyage to the Cape.

"Do you think of me as I think of you,
 My friends, my friends?"—She said it from the sea,
 The English minstrel in her minstrelsy,
 While, under brighter skies than erst she knew,
 Her heart grew dark, and groped there as the blind
 To reach across the waves friends left behind—
 "Do you think of me as I think of you?"

It seemed not much to ask—"as *I* of *you*?"
 We all do ask the same ; no eyelids cover
 Within the meekest eyes that question over :
 And little in the world the Loving do
 But sit (among the rocks ?) and listen for
 The echo of their own love evermore—
 "Do you think of me as I think of you?"

Love-learn'd she had sung of love and love,—
 And like a child that, sleeping with dropt head
 Upon the fairy-book he lately read,
 Whatever household noises round him move,
 Hears in his dream some elfin turbulence,—
 Even so suggestive to her inward sense,
 All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

And when the glory of her dream withdrew,
 When knightly gestes and courtly pageantries
 Were broken in her visionary eyes
 By tears the solemn seas attested true,—
 Forgetting that sweet lute beside her hand,
 She asked not,—“Do you praise me, O my land?”
 But,—“Think ye of me, friends, as I of you?”

Hers was the hand that played for many a year
 Love's silver phrase for England, smooth and well.
 Would God, her heart's more inward oracle
 In that lone moment might confirm her dear!
 For when her questioned friends in agony
 Made passionâte response, “We think of thee,”
 Her place was in the dust, too deep to hear.

Could she not wait to catch their answering breath?
 Was she content, content with ocean's sound
 Which dashed its mocking infinite around
 One thirsty for a little love?—beneath
 Those stars content, where last her song had gone,—
 They mute and cold in radiant life, as soon
 Their singer was to be, in darksome death?¹

Bring your vain answers—cry, “We think of thee!”
 How think ye of her, warm in long ago
 Delights? or crowned with budding bays? Not so.
 • None smile and none are crowned where lieth she,

¹ Her lyric on the polar star came home with her latest papers.

With all her visions unfulfilled save one,
 Her childhood's, of the palm-trees in the sun—
 And lo ! their shadow on her sepulchre !

“ Do you think of me as I think of you ? ”—
 O friends, O kindred, O dear brotherhood
 Of all the world ! what are we that we should
 For covenants of long affection sue ?
 Why press so near each other when the touch
 Is barred by graves ? Not much, and yet too much
 Is this “ Think of me as I think of you.”

But while on mortal lips I shape anew
 A sigh to mortal issues, verily
 Above the unshaken stars that see us die,
 A vocal pathos rolls ; and HE who drew
 All life from dust, and for all tasted death,
 By death and life and love, appealing saith,
Do you think of me as I think of you ?



THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET.

Can my affections find out nothing best,
 But still and still remove ?

QUARLES.

I PLANT a tree whose leaf
 The yew-tree leaf will suit.
 But when its shade is o'er you laid,
 Turn round and pluck the fruit.
 Now reach my harp from off the wall
 Where shines the sun aslant ;
 The sun may shine and we be cold !
 O harken, loving hearts and bold,
 Unto my wild romaunt,
 Margret, Margret.

Sitteth the fair ladye
Close to the river side
Which runneth on with a merry tone
Her merry thoughts to guide :
It runneth through the trees,
It runneth by the hill,
Nathless the lady's thoughts have found
A way more pleasant still.

Margret, Margret.

The night is in her hair
And giveth shade to shade,
And the pale moonlight on her forehead white
Like a spirit's hand is laid ;
Her lips part with a smile
Instead of speakings done :
I ween, she thinketh of a voice,
Albeit uttering none.

Margret, Margret.

All little birds do sit
With heads beneath their wings :
Nature doth seem in a mystic dream,
Absorbed from her living things ;
That dream by that ladye
Is certes unpartook,
For she looketh to the high cold stars
With a tender human look.

Margret, Margret.

The lady's shadow lies
Upon the running river ;
It lieth no less in its quietness,
For that which resteth never :
Most like a trusting heart
Upon a passing faith,
Or as upon the course of life
The steadfast doom of death.

Margret, Margret.

The lady doth not move,
The lady doth not dream,
Yet she seeth her shade no longer laid
In rest upon the stream :
It shaketh without wind,
It parteth from the tide,
It standeth upright in the cleft moonlight,
It sitteth at her side.

Margret, Margret.

Look in its face, ladye,
And keep thee from thy swoond ;
With a spirit bold thy pulses hold
And hear its voice's sound :
For so will sound thy voice
When thy face is to the wall,
And such will be thy face, ladye,
When the maidens work thy pall.

Margret, Margret.

" Am I not like to thee ?"
The voice was calm and low,
And between each word you might have heard
The silent forests grow ;
" *The like may sway the like ;*
By which mysterious law
Mine eyes from thine and my lips from thine
The light and breath may draw.

Margret, Margret.

" My lips do need thy breath,
My lips do need thy smile,
And my pallid eyne, that light in thine
Which met the stars erewhile :
Yet go with light and life
If that thou lovest one
In all the earth who loveth thee
As truly as the sun,

Margrét, Margret.'

Her cheek had waxed white
 Like cloud at fall of snow ;
 Then like to one at set of sun,
 It waxed red alsò ;
 For love's name maketh bold
 As if the loved were near :
 And then she sighed the deep long sigh
 Which cometh after fear.

Margret, Margret.

" Now, sooth, I fear thee not—
 Shall never fear thee now !"
 (And a noble sight was the sudden light
 Which lit her lifted brow.)
 " Can earth be dry of streams,
 Or hearts of love ?" she said ;
 " Who doubteth love, can know not love :
 He is already dead."

Margret, Margret.

" I have" . . . and here her lips
 Some word in pause did keep,
 And gave the while a quiet smile
 As if they paused in sleep,—
 " I have . . . a brother dear,
 A knight of knightly fame !
 I broidered him a knightly scarf
 With letters of my name.

Margret, Margret.

" I fed his grey goshawk,
 I kissed his fierce bloodhound,
 I sate at home when he might come
 And caught his horn's far sound :
 I sang him hunter's songs,
 I poured him the red wine,
 He looked across the cup, and said,
I love thee, sister mine."

Margret, Margret.

IT trembled on the grass
With a low, shadowy laughter ;
The sounding river which rolled, for ever
Stood dumb and stagnant after :
" Brave knight thy brother is !
But better loveth he
Thy chaliced wine than thy chaunted song,
And better both than thee,
Margret, Margret."

The lady did not heed
The river's silence while
Her own thoughts still ran at their will,
And calm was still her smile.
" My little sister wears
The look our mother wore :
I smooth her locks with a golden comb,
I bless her evermore."
Margret, Margret.

" I gave her my first bird
When first my voice it knew ;
I made her share my posies rare
And told her where they grew :
I taught her God's dear name
With prayer and praise to tell,
She looked from heaven into my face
And said, *I love thee well.*"
Margret, Margret.

IT trembled on the grass
With a low, shadowy laughter ;
You could see each bird as it woke and stared
Through the shrivelled foliage after.
" Fair child thy sister is !
But better loveth she
Thy golden comb than thy gathered flowers,
And better both than thee,
Margret, Margret."

Thy lady did not heed
 The withering on the bough ;
 Still calm her smile albeit the while
 A little pale her brow :
 " I have a father old,
 The lord of ancient halls
 An hundred friends are in his court
 Yet only me he calls.

Margret, Margret.

" An hundred knights are in his court
 Yet read I by his knee ;
 And when forth they go to the tourney show
 I rise not up to see :
 'T is a weary book to read,
 My tryst 's at set of sun,
 But loving and dear beneath the stars
 Is his blessing when I 've done."

Margret, Margret.

IT trembled on the grass
 With a low, shadowy laughter ;
 And moon and star though bright and far
 Did shrink and darken after.
 " High lord thy father is !
 But better loveth he
 His ancient halls than his hundred friends,
 His ancient halls, than thee,
 Margret, Margret."

The lady did not heed
 That the far stars did fail ;
 Still calm her smile, albeit the while . . .
 Nay, but she is not pale !
 " I have more than a friend
 Across the mountains dim :
 No other's voice is soft to me,
 Unless it nameth *him*."

Margret, Margret.

" Though louder beats my heart
I know his tread again,
And his fair plume aye, unless turned away,
For the tears do blind me then :
We brake no gold, a sign
Of stronger faith to be,
But I wear his last look in my soul,
Which said, *I love but thee !*"

Margret, Margret.

IT trembled on the grass
With a low, shadowy laughter ;
And the wind did toll, as a passing soul
Were sped by the church-bell after ;
And shadows, 'stead of light,
Fell from the stars above,
In flakes of darkness on her face
Still bright with trusting love.

Margret, Margret.

" He *loved* but only thee !
That love is transient too.
The wild hawk's bill doth dabble still
I' the mouth that vowed thee true :
Will he open his dull eyes,
When tears fall on his brow ?
Behold, the death-worm to his heart
Is a nearer thing than *thou*,
Margret, Margret."

Her face was on the ground—
None saw the agony ;
But the men at sea did that night agree
They heard a drowning cry :
And when the morning brake,
Fast rolled the river's tide,
With the green trees waving overhead
And a white corse laid beside.

Margret, Margret.

A knight's bloodhound and he
 The funeral watch did keep ;
 With a thought o the chase he stroked its face
 As it howled to see him weep.
 A fair child kissed the dead,
 But shrank before its cold ;
 And alone yet proudly in his hall
 Did stand a baron old.

Margret, Margret.

Hang up my harp again !
 I have no voice for song.
 Not song but wail, and mourners pale
 Not bards, to love belong.
 O failing human love !
 O light, by darkness known !
 O false, the while thou treadest earth !
 O deaf beneath the stone !

Margret, Margret.



A CHILD ASLEEP.

How he sleepeth, having drunken
 Weary childhood's mandragore !
 From its pretty eyes have sunken
 Pleasures to make room for more ;
 Sleeping near the withered nosegay which he pulled the
 day before.

Nosegays ! leave them for the waking ;
 Throw them earthward where they grew ;
 Dim are such beside the breaking
 Amaranths he looked unto :
 Folded eyes see brighter colours than the open ever do.

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows golden
From the palms they sprang beneath,
Now perhaps divinely holden,
Swing against him in a wreath :
We may think so from the quickening of his bloom and
of his breath.

Vision unto vision calleth
While the young child dreameth on :
Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth
With the glory thou hast won !
Darker wast thou in the garden yesternorn by summer
sun.

We should see the spirits ringing
Round thee, were the clouds away :
'T is the child-heart draws them, singing
In the silent-seeming clay—
Singing ! stars that seem the mutest go in music all the
way.

As the moths around a taper,
As the bees around a rose,
As the gnats around a vapour,
So the spirits group and close
Round about a holy childhood as if drinking its repose.

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,
Flash their diadems of youth
On the ringlets which half screen thee,
While thou smilest . . . not in sooth
Thy smile, but the overfair one, dropt from some ætherial
mouth.

Haply it is angels' duty,
During slumber, shade by shade
To fine down this childish beauty
To the thing it must be made
Ere the world shall bring it praises, or the tomb shall see
it fade.

Softly, softly ! make no noises !
Now he lieth dead and dumb ;
Now he hears the angels' voices
Folding silence in the room :
Now he muses deep the meaning of the Heaven-words as
they come.

Speak not ! he is consecrated ;
Breathe no breath across his eyes :
Lifted up and separated
On the hand of God he lies
In a sweetness beyond touching, held in cloistral sanctities.

Could ye bless him, father—mother,
Bless the dimple in his cheek ?
Dare ye look at one another
And the benediction speak ?
Would ye not break out in weeping and confess yourselves too weak ?

He is harmless, ye are sinful ;
Ye are troubled, he, at ease :
From his slumber, virtue winful
Floweth outward with increase.
Dare not bless him ! but be blessed by his peace, and go
in peace.

*A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD.*

THEY say that God lives very high ;
But if you look above the pines
You cannot see our God ; and why ?
And if you dig down in the mines
You never see Him in the gold ;
Though from Him all that 's glory shines.

God is so good, He wears a fold
Of heaven and earth across His face—
Like secrets kept, for love, untold.

But still I feel that His embrace
Slides down by thrills, through all things made,
Through sight and sound of every place.

As if my tender mother laid
On my shut lips her kisses' pressure,
Half-waking me at night, and said
"Who kissed you through the dark, dear guesser?"

*SLEEPING AND WATCHING.*

SLEEP on, baby, on the floor,
Tired of all the playing :
Sleep with smile the sweeter for
That, you dropped away in.
On your curls' full roundness stand
Golden lights serenely ;
One cheek, pushed out by the hand,
Folds the dimple inly :
Little head and little foot
Heavy laid for pleasure,
Underneath the lips half shut,
Slants the shining azure.
Open-soul in noonday sun,
So you lie and slumber :
Nothing evil having done,
Nothing can encumber.

I, who cannot sleep as well,
Shall I sigh to view you?
Or sigh further to foretell
All that may undo you?

Nay, keep smiling, little child,
Ere the sorrow neareth :
I will smile too ! patience mild
Pleasure's token weareth.
Nay, keep sleeping before loss :
I shall sleep though losing !
As by cradle, so by cross,
Sure is the reposing.

And God knows who sees us twain,
Child at childish leisure,
I am near as tired of pain
As you seem of pleasure.
Very soon too, by His grace
Gently wrapt around me,
Shall I show as calm a face,
Shall I sleep as soundly.
Differing in this, that you
Clasp your playthings, sleeping,
While my hand shall drop the few
Given to my keeping :
Differing in this, that I
Sleeping shall be colder,
And in waking presently,
Brighter to beholder :
Differing in this beside
(Sleeper, have you heard me ?
Do you move, and open wide
Eyes of wonder toward me ?)—
That while you I thus recall
From your sleep, I solely,
Me from mine an angel shall,
With reveillie holy.

ISOBEL'S CHILD.

—so find we profit,
By losing of our prayers.

SHAKESPEARE.

To rest the weary nurse has gone :
An eight-day watch had watch'd she,
Still rocking beneath sun and moon
The baby on her knee,
Till Isobel its mother said
"The fever waneth—wend to bed,
For now the watch comes round to me."

Then wearily the nurse did throw
Her pallet in the darkest place
Of that sick room, and slept and dreamed :
For, as the gusty wind did blow
The night-lamp's flare across her face,
She saw or seemed to see, but dreamed,
That the poplars tall on the opposite hill,
The seven tall poplars on the hill,
Did clasp the setting sun until
His rays dropped from him, pined and still
As blossoms in frost,
Till he waned and paled, so weirdly crossed,
To the colour of moonlight which doth pass
Over the dank ridged churchyard grass.
The poplars held the sun, and he
The eyes of the nurse that they should not see
—Not for a moment, the babe on her knee,
Though she shuddered to feel that it grew to be
Too chill, and lay too heavily.

She only dreamed ; for all the while

'T was Lady Isobel that kept
The little baby, and it slept
Fast, warm, as if its mother's smile,

Laden with love's dewy weight,
And red as rose of Harpocrate
Dropt upon its eyelids, pressed
Lashes to cheek in a seal'd rest.

And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—
She knew not that she smiled.
Against the lattice, dull and wild
Drive the heavy droning drops,
Drop by drop, the sound being one ;
As momentarily time's segments fall
On the ear of God, who hears through all
Eternity's unbroken monotone :
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—
She knew not that she smiled.
The wind in intermission stops
Down in the beechen forest,
Then cries aloud
As one at the sorest,
Self-stung, self-driven,
And rises up to its very tops,
Stiffening erect the branches bowed,
Dilating with a tempest-soul
The trees that with their dark hands break
Through their own outline, and heavy roll
Shadows as massive as clouds in heaven
Across the castle lake.
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well ;
She knew not that she smiled ;
She knew not that the storm was wild ;
Through the uproar drear she could not hear
The castle clock which struck anear—
She heard the low, light breathing of her child.

O sight for wondering look !
 While the external nature broke
 Into such abandonment,
 While the very mist, heart-rent
 By the lightning, seemed to eddy
 Against nature, with a din,—
 A sense of silence and of steady
 Natural calm appeared to come
 From things without, and enter in
 The human creature's room.

So motionless she sate,
 The babe asleep upon her knees,
 You might have dreamed their souls had gone
 Away to things inanimate,
 In such to live, in such to moan ;
 And that their bodies had ta'en back,
 In mystic change, all silences
 That cross the sky in cloudy rack,
 Or dwell beneath the reedy ground
 In water safe from their own sound :
 Only she wore
 The deepening smile I named before,
 And *that* a deepening love expressed ;
 And who at once can love and rest ?

In sooth the smile that then was keeping,
 Watch upon the baby sleeping,
 Floated with its tender light
 Downward, from the drooping eyes,
 Upward, from the lips apart,
 Over cheeks which had grown white
 With an eight-day weeping :
 All smiles come in such a wise
 Where tears shall fall or have of old—
 Like northern lights that fill the heart
 Of heaven in sign of cold.

Motionless she sate.
Her hair had fallen by its weight
On each side of her smile and lay
Very blackly on the arm
Where the baby nestled warm,
Pale as baby carved in stone
Seen by glimpses of the moon
Up a dark cathedral aisle :
But, through the storm, no moonbeam fell
Upon the child of Isobel—
Perhaps you saw it by the ray
Alone of her still smile.

A solemn thing it is to me
To look upon a babe that sleeps,
Wearing in its spirit-deeps
The undeveloped mystery
Of our Adam's taint and woe,
Which, when they developed be,
Will not let it slumber so ;
Lying new in life beneath
The shadow of the coming death,
With that soft, low, quiet breath,
As if it felt the sun ;
Knowing all things by their blooms.
Not their roots, yea, sun and sky
Only by the warmth that comes
Out of each, earth only by
The pleasant hues that o'er it run,
And human love by drops of sweet
White nourishment still hanging round
The little mouth so slumber-bound :
All which broken sentiency
And conclusion incomplete,
Will gather and unite and climb
To an immortality
Good or evil, each sublime,

Through life and death to life again.
 O little lids, now folded fast,
 Must ye learn to drop at last
 Our large and burning tears?
 O warm quick body, must thou lie,
 When the time comes round to die,
 Still from all the whirl of years,
 Bare of all the joy and pain?
 O small frail being, wilt thou stand
 At God's right hand,
 Lifting up those sleeping eyes
 Dilated by great destinies,
 To an endless waking? thrones and seraphim.
 Through the long ranks of their solemnities,
 Sunning thee with calm looks of Heaven's surprise,
 But thine alone on Him?
 Or else, self-willed, to tread the Godless place,
 (God keep thy will !) feel thine own energies
 Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead man's clasp,
 The sleepless deathless life within thee grasp,—
 While myriad faces, like one changeless face,
 With woe *not love's*, shall glass thee everywhere
 And overcome thee with thine own despair?

More soft, less solemn images
 Drifted o'er the lady's heart
 Silently as snow.
 She had seen eight days depart
 Hour by hour, on bended knees,
 With pale-wrung hands and prayings low
 And broken, through which came the sound
 Of tears that fell against the ground,
 Making sad stops :—" Dear Lord, dear Lord !"
 She still had prayed, (the heavenly word
 Broken by an earthly sigh)
 —"Thou who didst not erst deny
 The mother-joy to Mary mild,

Bless'd in the bless'd child
Which harkened in meek babyhood
Her cradle-hymn, albeit used
To all that music interfused
In breasts of angels high and good !
Oh, take not, Lord, my babe away—
Oh, take not to thy songful heaven
The pretty baby thou hast given,
Or ere that I have seen him play
Around his father's knees and known
That *he* knew how my love has gone
From all the world to him.
Think, God among the cherubim,
How I shall shiver every day
In thy June sunshine, knowing where
The grave-grass keeps it from his fair
Still cheeks : and feel, at every tread,
His little body, which is dead
And hidden in thy turfy fold,
Doth make thy whole warm earth a-cold !
O God, I am so young, so young—
I am not used to tears at nights
Instead of slumber—not to prayer
With sobbing lips and hands out-wrung !
Thou knowest all my prayings were
‘ I bless thee, God, for past delights—
Thank God ! ’ I am not used to bear
Hard thoughts of death ; the earth doth cover
No face from me of friend or lover :
And must the first who teaches me
The form of shrouds and funerals, be
Mine own first-born belov'd ? he
Who taught me first this mother-love ?
Dear Lord who spreadest out above
Thy loving, transpierced hands to meet
All lifted hearts with blessing sweet,—

Pierce not my heart, my tender heart
Thou madest tender ! Thou who art
So happy in thy heaven alway,
Take not mine only bliss away !”

She so had prayed : and God, who hears
Through seraph-songs the sound of tears,
From that belovèd babe had ta'en
The fever and the beating pain.
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well,
 (She knew not that she smiled, I wis)
Until the pleasant gradual thought
Which near her heart the smile enwrought,
Now soft and slow, itself did seem
To float along a happy dream,
 Beyond it into speech like this.

“ I prayed for thee, my little child,
 And God has heard my prayer !
And when thy babyhood is gone,
We two together undefiled
By men's repinings, will kneel down
 Upon His earth which will be fair
(Not covering thee, sweet !) to us twain,
 And give Him thankful praise.”

Dully and wildly drives the rain :
Against the lattices drives the rain.

“ I thank Him now, that I can think
 Of those same future days,
Nor from the harmless image shrink
 Of what I there might see—
Strange babies on their mother's knee.
Whose innocent soft faces might
From off mine eyelids strike the light,
 With looks not meant for me !”

Gustily blows the wind through the rain,
As against the lattices drives the rain.

“ But now, O baby mine, together,
We turn this hope of ours again
To many an hour of summer weather,
When we shall sit and intertwine
Our spirits, and instruct each other
In the pure loves of child and mother !
Two human loves make one divine.”

The thunder tears through the wind and the rain,
As full on the lattices drives the rain.

“ My little child, what wilt thou choose ?
Now let me look at thee and ponder.
What gladness, from the gladnesses
Futurity is spreading under
Thy gladsome sight ? Beneath the trees
Wilt thou lean all day, and lose
Thy spirit with the river seen
Intermittently between
The winding beechen alleys,—
Half in labour, half repose,
Like a shepherd keeping sheep,
Thou, with only thoughts to keep
Which never a bound will overpass,
And which are innocent as those
That feed, among Arcadian valleys,
Upon the dewy grass ? ”

The large white owl that with age is blind,
That hath sat for years in the old tree hollow,
Is carried away in a gust of wind ;
His wings could bear him not as fast
As he goeth now the lattice past ;
He is borne by the winds, the rains do follow,

His white wings to the blast out-flowing,
He hooteth in going,
And still, in the lightnings, coldly glitter
His round unblinking eyes.

“ Or, baby, wilt thou think it fitter
To be eloquent and wise,
One upon whose lips the air
Turns to solemn verities
For men to breathe anew, and win
A deeper-seated life within ?
Wilt be a philosopher,
By whose voice the earth and skies
Shall speak to the unborn ?
Or a poet, broadly spreading
The golden immortalities
Of thy soul on natures lorn
And poor of such, them all to guard
From their decay,—beneath thy treading,
Earth's flowers recovering hues of Eden,—
And stars, drawn downward by thy looks,
To shine ascendant in thy books ? ”

The tame hawk in the castle-yard,
How it screams to the lightning, with its wet
Jagged plumes overhanging the parapet !
And at the lady's door the hound
Scratches with a crying sound.

“ But, O my babe, thy lids are laid
Close, fast upon thy cheek,
And not a dream of power and sheen
Can make a passage up between.
Thy heart is of thy mother's made,
Thy looks are very meek,
And it will be their chosen place
To rest on some beloved face,

As these on thine, and let the noise
Of the whole world go on nor drown
The tender silence of thy joys :
Or when that silence shall have grown
Too tender for itself, the same
Yearning for sound,—to look above
And utter its one meaning, LOVE,
That *He* may hear His name."

No wind, no rain, no thunder !
The waters had trickled not slowly,
The thunder was not spent
Nor the wind near finishing ;
Who would have said that the storm was
diminishing ?

No wind, no rain, no thunder !
Their noises dropped asunder
From the earth and the firmament,
From the towers and the lattices,
Abrupt and echoless
As ripe fruits on the ground unshaken wholly.
As life in death.

And sudden and solemn the silence fell,
Startling the heart of Isobel

As the tempest could not :
Against the door went panting the breath
Of the lady's hound whose cry was still,
And she, constrained howe'er she would not,
Lifted her eyes and saw the moon
Looking out of heaven alone
Upon the poplared hill,—
A calm of God, made visible
That men might bless it at their will.

The moonshine on the baby's face
Falleth clear and cold ;

The mother's looks have fallen back
To the same place :
Because no moon with silver rack,
Nor broad sunrise in jasper skies
Has power to hold
Our loving eyes,
Which still revert, as ever must
Wonder and Hope, to gaze on the dust.

The moonshine on the baby's face
Cold and clear remaineth ;
The mother's looks do shrink away,—
The mother's looks return to stay,
As charm'd by what paineth :
Is any glamour in the case ?
Is it dream or is it sight ?
Hath the change upon the wild
Elements that signs the night,
Passed upon the child ?
It is not dream, but sight.

The babe has awakened from sleep
And unto the gaze of its mother
Bent over it, lifted another—
Not the baby-looks that go
Unaimingly to and fro,
But an earnest gazing deep
Such as soul gives soul at length
When by work and wail of years
It winneth a solemn strength
And mourneth as it wears.
A strong man could not brook
With pulse unhurried by fears,
To meet that baby's look
O'er glazed by manhood's tears,
The tears of a man full grown,
With a power to wring our own,

In the eyes all undefiled
Of a little three-months' child—
To see that babe-brow wrought
By the witnessing of thought
 To judgment's prodigy,
And the small soft mouth unweaned,
By mother's kiss o'erleaned,
(Putting the sound of loving
Where no sound else was moving
 Except the speechless cry)
Quickened to mind's expression,
Shaped to articulation,
Yea, uttering words, yea, naming woe,
 In tones that with it strangely went
 Because so baby-innocent,
As the child spake out to the mother, so :—

“ O mother, mother, loose thy prayer !
 Christ's name hath made it strong.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me
With its most loving cruelty,
 For floating my new soul along
 The happy heavenly air.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me
 In all this dark, upon this dull
Low earth, by only weepers trod.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me !
 Mine angel looketh sorrowful
Upon the face of God.¹

“ Mother, mother, can I dream
 Beneath your earthly trees ?
I had a vision and a gleam,
 I heard a sound more sweet than these

¹ “ For I say unto you that in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven.”—Matt. xviii. 10.

When rippled by the wind :
 Did you see the Dove with wings
 Bathed in golden glisterings
 From a sunless light behind,
 Dropping on me from the sky,
 Soft as mother's kiss, until
 I seemed to leap and yet was still ?
 Saw you how His love-large eye
 Looked upon me mystic calms,
 Till the power of his divine
 Vision was indrawn to mine ?
 Oh, the dream within the dream !
 I saw celestial places even.
 Oh, the vistas of high palms .
 Making finites of delight
 Through the heavenly infinite,
 Lifting up their green still tops
 To the heaven of heaven !
 Oh, the sweet life-tree that drops
 Shade like light across the river
 Glorified in its for ever
 Flowing from the Throne !
 Oh, the shining holinesses
 Of the thousand, thousand faces
 God-sunned by the throned ONE
 And made intense with such a love
 That, though I saw them turned above,
 Each loving seemed for also me !
 And, oh, the Unspeakable, the He,
 The manifest in secrecies
 Yet of mine own heart partaker
 With the overcoming look
 Of One who hath been once forsook
 And blesseth the forsaker !
 Mother, mother, let me go
 Toward the Face that looketh so !

Through the mystic winged Four
Whose are inward, outward eyes
Dark with light of mysteries
And the restless evermore
“Holy holy, holy,”—through
The sevenfold Lamps that burn in view
Of cherubim and seraphim,—
Through the four-and-twenty crowned
Stately elders white around,
Suffer me to go to Him !

“Is your wisdom very wise,
Mother, on the narrow earth,
Very happy, very worth
That I should stay to learn ?
Are these air-corrupting sighs
Fashioned by unlearned breath
Do the students' lamps that burn
All night, illumine death ?
Mother, albeit this be so,
Loose thy prayer and let me go
Where that bright chief angel stands
Apart from all his brother bands,
Too glad for smiling, having bent
In angelic wilderment
O'er the depths of God, and brought
Reeling thence one only thought
To fill his own eternity.
He the teacher is for me—
He can teach what I would know—
Mother, mother, let me go !

Can your poet make an Eden
No winter will undo,
And light a starry fire while heeding
His hearth's is burning too ?
Drown in music the earth's din,
And keep his own wild soul within

The law of his own harmony ?

Mother, albeit this be so,

Let me to my heaven go !

A little harp me waits thereby,
A harp whose strings are golden all
And tuned to music spherical,
Hanging on the green life-tree,
Where no willows ever be.

Shall I miss that harp of mine ?

Mother, no !—the Eye divine

Turned upon it, makes it shine ;

And when I touch it, poems sweet
Like separate souls shall fly from it,
Each to the immortal fytte.

We shall all be poets there,

Gazing on the chiefest Fair.

“ Love ! earth's love ! and *can* we love

Fixedly where all things move ?

Can the sinning love each other ?

Mother, mother,

I tremble in thy close embrace,

I feel thy tears adown my face,

Thy prayers do keep me out of bliss—

O dreary earthly love !

Loose thy prayer and let me go

To the place which loving is

Yet not sad ; and when is given

Escape to *thee* from this below,

Thou shalt behold me that I wait

For thee beside the happy Gate,

And silence shall be up in heaven

To hear our greeting kiss.”

The nurse awakes in the morning sun,

And starts to see beside her bed

The lady with a grandeur spread

Like pathos o'er her face, as one
God-satisfied and earth-undone.

The babe upon her arm was dead :
And the nurse could utter forth no cry,—
She was awed by the calm in the mother's eye.

“ Wake, nurse ! ” the lady said ;
“ *We* are waking—he and I—
I, on earth, and he, in sky :
And thou must help me to o'erlay
With garment white this little clay
Which needs no more our lullaby.

“ I changed the cruel prayer I made,
And bowed my meekened face, and prayed
That God would do His will ; and thus
He did it, nurse ! He parted us :
And His sun shows victorious
The dead calm face,—and *I* am calm,
And Heaven is harkening a new psalm.

“ This earthly noise is too anear,
Too loud, and will not let me hear
The little harp. My death will soon
Make silence.”

And a sense of tune,
A satisfied love meanwhile
Which nothing earthly could despoil,
Sang on within her soul.

Oh you,
Earth's tender and impassioned few,
Take courage to entrust your love
To Him so named who guards above
Its ends and shall fulfil !
Breaking the narrow prayers that may
Befit your narrow hearts, away
In His broad, loving will.

DE PROFUNDIS.

THE face which, duly as the sun,
Rose up for me with life begun,
To mark all bright hours of the day
With hourly love, is dimmed away,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

The tongue which, like a stream, could run
Smooth music from the roughest stone,
And every morning with "Good day"
Make each day good, is hushed away—
And yet my days go on, go on.

The heart which, like a staff, was one
For mine to lean and rest upon,
The strongest on the longest day
With steadfast love, is caught away,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

And cold before my summer's done,
And deaf in Nature's general tune,
And fallen too low for special fear,
And here, with hope no longer here,—
While the tears drop, my days go on.

The world goes whispering to its own,
"This anguish pierces to the bone;"
And tender friends go sighing round,
"What love can ever cure this wound?"
My days go on, my days go on.

The past rolls forward on the sun
And makes all night. O dreams begun,
Not to be ended! Ended bliss,
And life that will not end in this!
My days go on, my days go on,

Breath freezes on my lips to moan :
As one alone, once not alone,
I sit and knock at Nature's door,
Heart-bare, heart-hungry, very poor,
Whose desolated days go on.

I knock and cry,—Undone, undone !
Is there no help, no comfort,—none ?
No gleaning in the wide wheat-plains
Where others drive their loaded wains ?
My vacant days go on, go on.

This Nature, though the snows be down,
Thinks kindly of the bird of June :
The little red hip on the tree
Is ripe for such. What is for me,
Whose days so winterly go on ?

No bird am I, to sing in June,
And dare not ask an equal boon.
Good nests and berries red are Nature's
To give away to better creatures,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

I ask less kindness to be done,—
Only to loose these pilgrim-shoon,
(Too early worn and grimed) with sweet
Cool deathly touch to these tired feet,
Till days go out which now go on—

Only to lift the turf unmown
From off the earth where it has grown,
Some cubit-space, and say, " Behold,
Creep in, poor Heart, beneath that fold,
Forgetting how the days go on."

What harm would that do? Green anon
The sward would quicken, overshadowed
By skies as blue; and crickets might
Have leave to chirp there day and night
While my new rest went on, went on.

From gracious Nature have I won
Such liberal bounty? may I run
So, lizard-like, within her side,
And there be safe, who now am tried
By days that painfully go on?

—A Voice reproves me thereupon,
More sweet than Nature's when the drone
Of bees is sweetest and more deep
Than when the rivers overleap
The shuddering pines, and thunder on.

God's Voice, not Nature's! Night and noon
He sits upon the great white throne
And listens for the creatures' praise.
What babble we of days and days?
The Day-spring He, whose days go on.

He reigns above, He reigns alone;
Systems burn out and leave His throne;
Fair mists of seraphs melt and fall
Around Him, changeless amid all,—
Ancient of Days, whose days go on.

He reigns below, He reigns alone,
And, having life in love foregone
Beneath the crown of sovran thorns,
He reigns the Jealous God. Who mourns
Or rules with Him, while days go on?

By anguish which made pale the sun,
I hear Him charge His saints that none
Among His creatures anywhere
Blasphe^me against Him with despair,
However darkly days go on.

Take from my head the thorn-wreath brown !
No mortal grief deserves that crown.
O súpreme Love, chief misery,
The sharp regalia are for THEE
Whose days eternally go on !

For us,—whatever 's undergone,
Thou knowest, willest what is done.
Grief may be joy misunderstood ;
Only the Good discerns the good.
I trust Thee while my days go on.

Whatever 's lost, it first was won ;
We will not struggle nor impugn.
Perhaps the cup was broken here,
That Heaven's new wine might show more clear.
I praise Thee while my days go on.

I praise Thee while my days go on ;
I love Thee while my days go on :
Through dark and dearth, through fire and frost,
With emptied arms and treasure lost,
I thank Thee while my days go on.

And having in thy life-depth thrown
Being and suffering (which are one),
As a child drops his pebble small
Down some deep well, and hears it fall
Smiling—so I. THY DAYS GO ON,

BEREAVEMENT.

WHEN some Beloveds, 'neath whose eyelids lay
The sweet lights of my childhood, one by one
Did leave me dark before the natural sun,
And I astonished fell and could not pray,—
A thought within me to myself did say,
“Is God less God, that *thou* art left undone?
Rise, worship, bless Him, in this sackcloth spun,
As in that purple!”—But I answered, Nay!
What child his filial heart in words can loose
If he behold his tender father raise
The hand that chastens sorely? Can he choose
But sob in silence with an upward gaze?—
And *my* great Father, thinking fit to bruise,
Discerns in speechless tears both prayer and praise.

CONSOLATION.

ALL are not taken ; there are left behind
Living Beloveds, tender looks to bring
And make the daylight still a happy thing,
And tender voices, to make soft the wind :
But if it were not so—if I could find
No love in all the world for comforting,
Nor any path but hollowly did ring
Where “dust to dust” the love from life disjoined,
And if, before those sepulchres unmoving
I stood alone, (as some forsaken lamb
Goes bleating up the moors in weary dearth)
Crying “Where are ye, O my loved and loving?”—
I know a Voice would sound, “Daughter, I AM.
Can I suffice for HEAVEN and not for earth?”

LOVE.

WE cannot live, except thus mutually
 We alternate, aware or unaware,
 The reflex act of life ; and when we bear
 Our virtue outward most impulsively,
 Most full of invocation, and to be
 Most instantly compellant, certes there
 We live most life, whoever breathes most air
 And counts his dying years by sun and sea.
 But when a soul, by choice and conscience, doth
 Throw out her full force on another soul,
 The conscience and the concentration both
 Make mere life, Love. For Life in perfect whole
 And aim consummated, is Love in sooth,
 As nature's magnet-heat rounds pole with pole.



THE SERAPH AND POET.

THE seraph sings before the manifest
 God-One, and in the burning of the Seven,
 And with the full life of consummate Heaven
 Heaving beneath him like a mother's breast
 Warm with her first-born's slumber in that nest.
 The poet sings upon the earth grave-riven,
 Before the naughty world, soon self-forgiven
 For wronging him,—and in the darkness prest
 From his own soul by worldly weights. Even so,
 Sing, seraph with the glory ! heaven is high ;
 Sing, poet with the sorrow ! earth is low ;
 The universe's inward voices cry
 "Amen" to either song of joy or woe :
 Sing, seraph,—poet,—sing on equally !

A FLOWER IN A LETTER.

My lonely chamber next the sea
Is full of many a flower set free
 By summer's earliest duty :
Dear friends upon the garden-walk
Might stop amid their fondest talk
 To pull the least in beauty.

A thousand flowers, each seeming one
That learnt by gazing on the sun
 To counterfeit his shining ;
Within whose leaves the holy dew
That falls from heaven has won anew
 A glory, in declining.

Red roses, used to praises long,
Contented with the poet's song,
 The nightingale's being over ;
And lilies white, prepared to touch
The whitest thought, nor soil it much,
 Of dreamer turned to lover.

Deep violets, you liken to
The kindest eyes that look on you,
 Without a thought disloyal ;
And cactuses, a queen might don
If weary of a golden crown,
 And still appear as royal.

Pansies for ladies all,—I wis
 That none who wear such brooches, miss
 A jewel in the mirror ;
And tulips, children love to stretch
Their fingers down, to feel in each
 Its beauty's secret nearer.

Love's language may be talked with these ;
To work out choicest sentences,
 No blossoms can be meeter ;
And, such being used in Eastern bowers,
Young maids may wonder if the flowers
 Or meanings be the sweeter.

And such being strewn before a bride,
Her little foot may turn aside,
 Their longer bloom decreeing,
Unless some voice's whispered sound
Should make her gaze upon the ground
 Too earnestly for seeing.

And such being scattered on a grave,
Whoever mourneth there may have
 A type which seemeth worthy
Of that fair body hid below,
Which bloomed on earth a time ago
 Then perished as the earthy.

And such being wreathed for worldly feast,
Across the brimming cup some guest
 Their rainbow colours viewing
May feel them, with a silent start,
The covenant, his childish heart
 With nature made, renewing

No flowers our gardened England hath
To match with these, in bloom and breath
 Which from the world are hiding
In sunny Devon moist with rills,—
A nunnery of cloistered hills,
 The elements presiding.

By Loddon's stream the flowers are fair
That meet one gifted lady's care
 With prodigal rewarding,

(For Beauty is too used to run
To Mitford's bower—to want the sun
To light her through the garden).

But here, all summers are comprised,
The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
Before the priestly moonshine ;
And every wind with stoléd feet,
In wandering down the alleys sweet,
Steps lightly on the sunshine,

And (having promised Harpocrate
Among the nodding roses that
No harm shall touch his daughters)
Gives quite away the rushing sound
He dares not use upon such ground,
To ever-trickling waters.

Yet, sun and wind ! what can ye do
But make the leaves more brightly show
In posies newly gathered ?
I look away from all your best,
To one poor flower unlike the rest,
A little flower half-withered.

I do not think it ever was
A pretty flower,—to make the grass
Look greener where it reddened ;
And now it seems ashamed to be
Alone, in all this company,
Of aspect shrunk and saddened.

A chamber-window was the spot
It grew in, from a garden-pot,
Among the city shadows :
If any, tending it, might seem
To smile, 't was only in a dream
Of nature in the meadows.

How coldly on its head did fall
The sunshine, from the city wall
In pale refraction driven !
How sadly plashed upon its leaves
The raindrops, losing in the eaves
The first sweet news of heaven !

And those who planted, gathered it
In gamesome or in loving fit,
And sent it as a token
Of what their city pleasures be,—
For one, in Devon by the sea
And garden-blooms, to look on.

But SHE for whom the jest was meant,
With a grave passion innocent
Receiving what was given,—
Oh, if her face she turn'd then,
Let none say 't was to gaze again
Upon the flowers of Devon !

Because, whatever virtue dwells
In genial skies, warm oracles
For gardens brightly springing,—
The flower which grew beneath your eyes,
Belov'd friends, to mine supplies
A beauty worthier singing !

*A DEAD ROSE.*

O ROSE, who dares to name thee ?
No longer roseate now, nor soft nor sweet,
But pale and hard and dry as stubble wheat,—
Kept seven years in a drawer, thy titles shame thee.

The breeze that used to blow thee
Between the hedgerow thorns, and take away
An odour up the lane to last all day,—
If breathing now, unsweetened would forego thee.

The sun that used to smite thee,
And mix his glory in thy gorgeous urn
Till beam appeared to bloom, and flower to burn,—
If shining now, with not a hue would light thee.

The dew that used to wet thee,
And, white first, grow incarnadined because
It lay upon thee where the crimson was,—
If dropping now, would darken where it met thee.

The fly that 'lit upon thee
To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet
Along thy leaf's pure edges after heat,—
If 'lighting now, would coldly overrun thee.

The bee that once did suck thee,
And build thy perfumed ambers up his hive,
And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce alive,—
If passing now, would blindly overlook thee.

The heart doth recognize thee,
Alone, alone ! the heart doth smell thee sweet
Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee most complete,
Perceiving all those changes that disguise thee.

Yes, and the heart doth owe thee
More love, dead rose, than to any roses bold
Which Julia wears at dances, smiling cold :—
Lie still upon this heart which breaks below thee !



LOVED ONCE.

I CLASSED, appraising once,
 Earth's lamentable sounds,—the welladay,
 The jarring yea and nay,
 The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,
 The sobbed farewell, the welcome mournfuller,—
 But all did leaven the air
 With a less bitter leaven of sure despair
 Than these words,—“ I loved ONCE.”

And who saith, “ I loved ONCE ” ?
 Not angels,—whose clear eyes, love, love foresee,
 Love, through eternity,
 And by To Love do apprehend To Be.
 Not God, called LOVE, His noble crown-name casting
 A light too broad for blasting :
 The great God changing not from everlasting,
 Saith never, “ I loved ONCE.”

Oh, never is “ Loved ONCE.”
 Thy word, thou Victim-Christ, misprizèd friend !
 Thy cross and curse may rend,
 But having loved Thou lovest to the end.
 This is man's saying—man's : too weak too move
 One spherèd star above,
 Man desecrates the eternal God-word Love
 By his No More, and Once.

How say ye, “ We loved once,”
 Blasphemers ? Is your earth not cold enow,
 Mourners, without that snow ?
 Ah, friends, and would ye wrong each other so ?
 And could ye say of some whose love is known,
 Whose prayers have met your own,
 Whose tears have fallen for you, whose smiles have shone
 So long—“ We loved them ONCE ” ?

Could ye, "We loved her once,"
 Say calm of me, sweet friends, when out of sight?
 When hearts of better right
 Stand in between me and your happy light?
 Or when, as flowers kept too long in the shade,
 Ye find my colours fade,
 And all that is not love in me, decayed?
 Such words—Ye loved me ONCE!

Could ye, "We loved her once"
 Say cold of me when further put away
 In earth's sepulchral clay,
 When mute the lips which deprecate to-day?
 Not so! not then—least then! When life is shriven
 And death's full joy is given,—
 Of those who sit and love you up in heaven,
 Say not, "We loved them once."

Say never, ye loved ONCE :
 God is too near above, the grave, beneath,
 And all our moments breathe
 Too quick in mysteries of life and death,
 For such a word. The eternities avenge
 Affections light of range.
 There comes no change to justify that change,
 Whatever comes—Loved ONCE!

And yet that same word ONCE
 Is humanly acceptive. Kings have said,
 Shaking a discrowned head,
 "We ruled once,"—dotards, "We once taught and led,"
 Cripples once danced i' the vines, and bards approved,
 Were once by scornings moved :
 But love strikes one hour—LOVE! those *never* loved
 Who dreamed that they loved ONCE.



SUBSTITUTION.

WHEN some belovèd voice that was to you
Both sound and sweetness, faileth suddenly,
And silence against which you dare not cry,
Aches round you like a strong disease and new—
What hope? what help? what music will undo
That silence to your sense? Not friendship's sigh,
Not reason's subtle count; not melody
Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunas blew;
Not songs of poets, nor of nightingales
Whose hearts leap upward through the cypress-trees
To the clear moon; nor yet the spheric laws
Self-chanted, nor the angels' sweet All hails,
Met in the smile of God: nay, none of these.
Speak THOU, availing Christ!—and fill this pause.

COMFORT.

SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet
From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,
Lest I should fear and fall, and miss Thee so
Who art not missed by any that entreat.
Speak to me as to Mary at Thy feet!
And if no precious gums my hands bestow,
Let my tears drop like amber while I go
In reach of Thy divinest voice complete
In humanest affection—thus, in sooth,
To lose the sense of losing. As a child,
Whose song-bird seeks the wood for evermore
Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth
Till, sinking on her breast, love-reconciled,
He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

TEARS.

THANK God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for. That is well—
That is light grieving ! lighter, none befell
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
Tears ! what are tears ? The babe weeps in its cot,
The mother singing ; at her marriage-bell
The bride weeps, and before the oracle
Of high-faned hills the poet has forgot
Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank God for grace,
Ye who weep only ! If, as some have done,
Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place
And touch but tombs,—look up ! those tears will run
Soon in long rivers down the lifted face,
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.



GRIEF.

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passionless ;
That only men incredulous of despair,
Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air,
Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness
In souls as countries, lieth silent-bare
Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare
Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted man, express
Grief for thy Dead in silence like to death—
Most like a monumental statue set
In everlasting watch and moveless woe
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.
Touch it ; the marble eyelids are not wet :
If it could weep, it could arise and go.

FUTURITY.

AND, O belovèd voices, upon which
 Ours passionately call because erelong
 Ye brake off in the middle of that song
 We sang together softly, to enrich
 The poor world with the sense of love, and witch
 The heart out of things evil,—I am strong,
 Knowing ye are not lost for aye among
 The hills, with last year's thrush. God keeps a niche
 In Heaven to hold our idols ; and albeit
 He brake them to our faces and denied
 That our close kisses should impair their white,
 I know we shall behold them raised, complete,
 The dust swept from their beauty,—glorified
 New Memnons singing in the great God-light.



THE TWO SAYINGS.

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat
 Like pulses in the Church's brow and breast,
 And by them we find rest in our unrest
 And, heart-deep in salt tears, do yet entreat
 God's fellowship as if on heavenly seat.
 The first is JESUS WEPT,—whereon is prest
 Full many a sobbing face that drops its best
 And sweetest waters on the record sweet :
 And one is where the Christ, denied and scorned,
 LOOKED UPON PETER. Oh, to render plain,
 By help of having loved a little and mourned,
 That look of sovran love and sovran pain
 Which HE, who could not sin yet suffered, turned
 On him who could reject but not sustain !

THE LOOK.

THE Saviour looked on Peter. Ay, no word,
 No gesture of reproach ; the Heavens serene,
 Though heavy with armed justice, did not lean
 Their thunders that way : the forsaken Lord
Looked only, on the traitor. None record
 What that look was, none guess ; for those who have seen
 Wronged lovers loving through a death-pang keen,
 Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a sword,
 Have missed Jehovah at the judgment-call.
 And Peter, from the height of blasphemy—
 “ I never knew this man ”—did quail and fall
 As knowing straight THAT God ; and turned free
 And went out speechless from the face of all,
 And filled the silence, weeping bitterly.



THE MEANING OF THE LOOK.

I THINK that look of Christ might seem to say—
 “ Thou, Peter ! art thou then a common stone
 Which I at last must break my heart upon,
 For all God’s charge to His high angels may
 Guard my foot better ? Did I yesterday
 Wash *thy* feet, my beloved, that they should run
 Quick to deny me ’neath the morning sun ?
 And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray ?
 The cock crows coldly.—Go, and manifest
 A late contrition, but no bootless fear !
 For when thy final need is dreariest,
 Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here ;
 My voice to God and angels shall attest,
Because I KNOW this man, let him be clear.”

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY REASON.

I THINK we are too ready with complaint
 In this fair world of God's. Had we no hope
 Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope
 Of yon grey blank of sky, we might grow faint
 To muse upon eternity's constraint
 Round our aspirant souls ; but since the scope
 Must widen early, is it well to droop,
 For a few days consumed in loss and taint ?
 O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted
 And, like a cheerful traveller, take the road,
 Singing beside the hedge ! What if the bread
 Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
 To meet the flints ? At least it may be said,
 " Because the way is *short*, I thank thee, God."

*EXAGGERATION.*

WE overstate the ills of life, and take
 Imagination (given us to bring down
 The choirs of singing angels overshadowed
 By God's clear glory) down our earth to rake
 The dismal snows instead, flake following flake,
 To cover all the corn ; we walk upon
 The shadow of hills across a level thrown,
 And pant like climbers : near the alderbrake
 We sigh so loud, the nightingale within
 Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.
 O brothers, let us leave the shame and sin
 Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
 The holy name of GRIEF !—holy herein,
 That by the grief of ONE came all our good.

DISCONTENT.

LIGHT human nature is too lightly tost
And ruffled without cause, complaining on,
Restless with rest, until, being overthrown,
It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost
Or a small wasp have crept to the innermost
Of our ripe peach, or let the wilful sun
Shine westward of our window,—straight we run
A furlong's sigh as if the world were lost.
But what time through the heart and through the brain
God hath transfixed us,—we, so moved before,
Attain to a calm. Ay, shouldering weights of pain,
We anchor in deep waters, safe from shore,
And hear submissive o'er the stormy main
God's chartered judgments walk for evermore.

PATIENCE TAUGHT BY NATURE.

"O DREARY life," we cry, "O dreary life!"
And still the generations of the birds
Sing through our sighing, and the flocks and herds
Serenely live while we are keeping strife
With Heaven's true purpose in us, as a knife
Against which we may struggle! Ocean girds
Unslackened the dry land, savannah-swards
Unweary sweep, hills watch unworn, and rife
Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest-trees
To show, above, the unwasted stars that pass
In their old glory: O thou God of old,
Grant me some smaller grace than comes to these!—
But so much patience as a blade of grass
Grows by, contented through the heat and cold.

A THOUGHT FOR A LONELY DEATH-BED.

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND E. C.

IF God compel thee to this destiny,
 To die alone, with none beside thy bed
 To ruffle round with sobs thy last word said
 And mark with tears the pulses ebb from thee,—
 Pray then alone, "O Christ, come tenderly !
 By Thy forsaken Sonship in the red
 Drear wine-press,—by the wilderness outspread,—
 And the lone garden where Thine agony
 Fell bloody from Thy brow,—by all of those
 Permitted desolations, comfort mine !
 No earthly friend being near me, interpose
 No deathly angel 'twixt my face and Thine,
 But stoop Thyself to gather my life's rose,
 And smile away my mortal to Divine !"

*WORK AND CONTEMPLATION.*

THE woman singeth at her spinning-wheel
 A pleasant chant, ballad or barcarole ;
 She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,
 Far more than of her flax ; and yet the reel
 Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
 With quick adjustment, provident control,
 The lines, too subtly twisted to unroll,
 Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal
 To the dear Christian Church—that we may do
 Our Father's business in these temples mirk,
 Thus swift and steadfast, thus intent and strong ;
 While thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue
 Some high, calm, spheric tune, and prove our work
 The better for the sweetness of our song.

ADEQUACY.

Now, by the verdure on thy thousand hills,
Belovèd England, doth the earth appear
Quite good enough for men to overbear
The will of God in, with rebellious wills !
We cannot say the morning-sun fulfils
Ingloriously its course, nor that the clear
Strong stars without significance insphere
Our habitation : we, meantime, our ills
Heap up against this good and lift a cry
Against this work-day world, this ill-spread feast,
As if ourselves were better certainly
Than what we come to. Maker and High Priest,
I ask Thee not my joys to multiply,—
Only to make me worthier of the least.

*THE PRISONER.*

I COUNT the dismal time by months and years
Since last I felt the green sward under foot,
And the great breath of all things summer-mute
Met mine upon my lips. Now earth appears
As strange to me as dreams of distant spheres
Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at. Nature's lute
Sounds on, behind this door so closely shut,
A strange wild music to the prisoner's ears,
Dilated by the distance, till the brain
Grows dim with fancies which it feels too fine,
While ever, with a visionary pain,
Past the precluded senses, sweep and shine
Streams, forests, glades, and many a golden train
Of sunlit hills transfigured to Divine.

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE.

"To win the secret of a weed's plain heart."

LOWELL.

MOUNTAIN gorses, ever-golden,
Cankered not the whole year long !
Do ye teach us to be strong,
Howsoever pricked and holden
Like your thorny blooms, and so
Trodden on by rain and snow,
Up the hill-side of this life, as bleak as where ye grow ?

Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms,
Do ye teach us to be glad
When no summer can be had,
Blooming in our inward bosoms ?
Ye, whom God preserveth still,
Set as lights upon a hill,
Tokens to the wintry earth that Beauty liveth still !

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us
From that academic chair
Canopied with azure air,
That the wisest word man reaches
Is the humblest he can speak ?
Ye, who live on mountain peak,
Yet live low along the ground, beside the grasses meek !

Mountain gorses, since Linnæus
Knelt beside you on the sod,
For your beauty thanking God,—
For your teaching, ye should see us
Bowing in prostration new !
Whence arisen,—if one or two
Drops be on our cheeks—O world, they are not tears
but dew.

WISDOM UNAPPLIED.

If I were thou, O butterfly,
And poised my purple wing to spy
The sweetest flowers that live and die,

I would not waste my strength on those,
As thou,—for summer has a close,
And pansies bloom not in the snows.

If I were thou, O working bee,
And all that honey-gold I see,
Could delve from roses easily,

I would not hive it at man's door,
As thou,—that heirdom of my store
Should make him rich and leave me poor.

If I were thou, O eagle proud,
And screamed the thunder back aloud,
And faced the lightning from the cloud,

I would not build my eyrie throne,
As thou,—upon a crumbling stone
Which the next storm may trample down.

If I were thou, O gallant steed,
With pawing hoof and dancing head,
And eye outrunning thine own speed,

I would not meeken to the rein,
As thou,—nor smooth my nostril plain
From the glad desert's snort and strain.

If I were thou, red-breasted bird,
With song at shut-up window heard,
Like Love's sweet yes too long deferred,

I would not overstay delight,
As thou,—but take a swallow-flight
Till the new spring returned to sight.

While yet I spake, a touch was laid
Upon my brow, whose pride did fade
As thus, methought, an angel said,—

“If I were *thou* who sing'st this song,
Most wise for others, and most strong
In seeing right while doing wrong,

“I would not waste my cares, and choose,
As *thou*,—to seek what thou must lose,
Such gains as perish in the use.

“I would not work where none can win,
As *thou*,—halfway 'twixt grief and sin,
But look above and judge within.

“I would not let my pulse beat high,
As *thou*,—towards fame's regality,
Nor yet in love's great jeopardy.

“I would not champ the hard cold bit,
As *thou*,—of what the world thinks fit,
But take God's freedom, using it.

“I would not play earth's winter out,
As *thou*,—but gird my soul about,
And live for life past death and doubt.

“Then sing, O singer!—but allow,
Beast, fly and bird, called foolish now
Are wise (for all they scorn) as thou.”



TO MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

IN HER GARDEN.

WHAT time I lay these rhymes anear thy feet,
Benignant friend, I will not proudly say
As better poets use, "These *flowers* I lay,"
Because I would not wrong thy roses sweet,
Blaspheming so their name. And yet, repeat
Thou, overleaning them this springtime day,
With heart as open to love as theirs to May,
—"Low-rooted verse may reach some heavenly heat,
Even like my blossoms, if as nature-true
Though not as precious." Thou art unperplexed,
Dear friend, in whose dear writings drops the dew
And blow the natural airs,—thou, who art next
To nature's self in cheering the world's view,—
To preach a sermon on so known a text !



ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDSWORTH BY
B. R. HAYDON.

WORDSWORTH upon Helvellyn ! Let the cloud
Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind,
Then break against the rock, and show behind
The lowland valleys floating up to crowd
The sense with beauty. He with forehead bowed
And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined
Before the sovran thought of his own mind,
And very meek with inspirations proud,
Takes here his rightful place as poet-priest
By the high altar, singing prayer and prayer
To the higher Heavens. A noble vision free

Our Haydon's hand has flung out from the mist :
 No portrait this, with Academic air !
 This is the poet and his poetry.

TO BETTINE,

THE CHILD FRIEND OF GOETHE.

" I have the second sight, Goethe ! "—*Letters of a Child.*

BETTINE, friend of Goethe,
Hadst thou the second sight—
 Upturning worship and delight
 With such a loving duty
 To his grand face, as women will,
 The childhood 'neath thine eyelids still ?

—Before his shrine to doom thee,
 Using the same child's smile
 That heaven and earth, beheld erewhile
 For the first time, won from thee
 Ere star and flower grew dim and dead
 Save at his feet and o'er his head ?

—Digging thine heart and throwing
 Away its childhood's gold,
 That so its woman-depth might hold
 His spirit's overflowing ?
 (For surging souls, no worlds can bound,
 Their channel in the heart have found.)

O child, to change appointed,
 Thou hadst not second sight !
 What eyes the future view aright
 Unless by tears anointed ?
 Yea, only tears themselves can show
 The burning ones that have to flow.

O woman, deeply loving,
Thou hadst not second sight !
The star is very high and bright,
And none can see it moving.
Love looks around, below, above,
Yet all his prophecy is—love.

The bird thy childhood's playing
Sent onward o'er the sea,
Thy dove of hope came back to thee
Without a leaf : art laying
Its wet cold wing no sun can dry,
Still in thy bosom secretly ?

Our Goethe's friend, Bettine,
I have the second sight !
The stone upon his grave is white,
The funeral stone between ye ;
And in thy mirror thou hast viewed
Some change as hardly understood.

Where 's childhood ? where is Goethe ?
The tears are in thine eyes,
Nay, thou shalt yet reorganize
Thy maidenhood of beauty
In his own glory, which is smooth
Of wrinkles and sublime in youth.

The poet's arms have wound thee,
He breathes upon thy brow,
He lifts thee upward in the glow
Of his great genius round thee,—
The childlike poet undefiled
Preserving evermore THE CHILD.



HUGH STUART BOYD.

HIS BLINDNESS.

GOD would not let the spheric lights accost
 This God-loved man, and bade the earth stand off
 With all her beckoning hills whose golden stuff
 Under the feet of the royal sun is crossed.
 Yet such things were to him not wholly lost,—
 Permitted, with his wandering eyes light-proof,
 To catch fair visions rendered full enough
 By many a ministrant accomplished ghost,—
 Still seeing, to sounds of softly-turned book-leaves,
 Sappho's crown-rose, and Meleager's Spring,
 And Gregory's starlight on Greek-burnished eyes :
 Till Sensuous and Unsensuous seemed one thing,
 Viewed from one level,—earth's reapers at the sheaves
 Scarce plainer than Heaven's angels on the wing.



HUGH STUART BOYD.

HIS DEATH, 1848.

BELOVED friend, who living many years
 With sightless eyes raised vainly to the sun,
 Didst learn to keep thy patient soul in tune
 To visible nature's elemental cheers !
 God has not caught thee to new hemispheres
 Because thou wast aweary of this one ;—
 I think thine angel's patience first was done,
 And that he spake out with celestial tears,
 " Is it enough, dear God ? then lighten so
 This soul that smiles in darkness ! "

Steadfast friend,
 Who never didst my heart or life misknow,

Nor either's faults too keenly apprehend,—
 How can I wonder when I see thee go
 To join the Dead found faithful to the end ?



HUGH STUART BOYD.

LEGACIES.

THREE gifts the Dying left me,—Æschylus,
 And Gregory Nazianzen, and a clock
 Chiming the gradual hours out like a flock
 Of stars whose motion is melodious.
 The books were those I used to read from, thus
 Assisting my dear teacher's soul to unlock
 The darkness of his eyes ; now, mine they mock,
 Blinded in turn by tears : now, murmurous
 Sad echoes of my young voice, years ago
 Entoning from these leaves the Grecian phrase,
 Return and choke my utterance. Books, lie down
 In silence on the shelf there, within gaze ;
 And thou, clock, striking the hour's pulses on,
 Chime in the day which ends these parting-days !



A LAMENT FOR ADONIS.

FROM BION.

I MOURN for Adonis—Adonis is dead,
 Fair Adonis is dead, and the Loves are lamenting
 Sleep, Cypris, no more on thy purple-strewed bed :
 Arise, wretch stoled in black ; beat thy breast
 unrelenting,
 And shriek to the worlds, " Fair Adonis is dead."

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are lamenting.

He lies on the hills in his beauty and death ;
The white tusk of a boar has transpierced his white
thigh.

Cytherea grows mad at his thin gasping breath,
While the black blood drips down on the pale ivory,
And his eyeballs lie quenched with the weight of his
brows,

The rose fades from his lips, and upon them just parted
The kiss dies the goddess consents not to lose,
Though the kiss of the Dead cannot make her glad-
hearted :

He knows not who kisses him dead in the dews.

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are lamenting.

Deep, deep in the thigh is Adonis' wound,
But a deeper, is Cypris's bosom presenting.

The youth lieth dead while his dogs howl around,
And the nymphs weep aloud from the mists of the hill,
And the poor Aphrodité, with tresses unbound,
All dishevelled, unsandaled, shrieks mournful and shrill
Through the dusk of the groves. The thorns, tearing
her feet,

Gather up the red flower of her blood which is holy,
Each footstep she takes ; and the valleys repeat
The sharp cry she utters, and draw it out slowly.

She calls on her spouse, her Assyrian, on him
Her own youth, while the dark blood spreads over his
body,

The chest taking hue from the gash in the limb,
And the bosom once ivory, turning to ruddy.

Ah, ah, Cytherea ! the Loves are lamenting :

She lost her fair spouse and so lost her fair smile ;
When he lived she was fair, by the whole world's con-
senting,

Whose fairness is dead with him : woe worth the while !

All the mountains above and the oaklands below

Murmur, ah, ah Adonis ! the streams overflow

Aphrodite's deep wail ; river fountains in pity

Weep soft in the hills, and the flowers as they blow

Redden outward with sorrow, while all hear her go

With the song of her sadness through mountain and city.

Ah, ah, Cytherea ! Adonis is dead,

Fair Adonis is dead—Echo answers, Adonis !

Who weeps not for Cypris, when bowing her head

She stares at the wound where it gapes and astonies?

—When, ah, ah !—she saw how the blood ran away

And empurpled the thigh, and, with wild hands flung out,

Said with sobs, " Stay Adonis ! unhappy one, stay,

Let me feel thee once more, let me ring thee about

With the clasp of my arms, and press kiss into kiss !

Wait a little, Adonis, and kiss me again,

For the last time, beloved,—and but so much of this

That the kiss may learn life from the warmth of the strain !

—Till thy breath shall exude from thy soul to my mouth,

To my heart, and, the love-charm I once more receiving,

May drink thy love in it and keep of a truth

That one kiss in the place of Adonis the living.

Thou fliest me, mournful one, fliest me far,

My Adonis, and seekest the Acheron portal,—

To Hell's cruel King goest down with a scar,

While I weep and live on like a wretched immortal,

And follow no step ! O Persephoné, take him,

My husband !—thou 'rt better and brighter than I,

So all beauty flows down to thee : I cannot make him

Look up at my grief ; there 's despair in my cry,
Since I wail for Adonis who died to me—died to me—
Then, I fear *thee* !—Art thou dead, my Adored ?
Passion ends like a dream in the sleep that 's denied to
me,
Cypris is widowed, the Loves seek their lord
All the house through in vain. Charm of cestus has ceased
With thy clasp ! O too bold in the hunt past preventing,
Ay, mad, thou so fair, to have strife with a beast !”
Thus the goddess wailed on—and the Loves are
lamenting.

Ah, ah, Cytherea ! Adonis is dead.
She wept tear after tear with the blood which was shed,
And both turned into flowers for the earth's garden-
close—
Her tears, to the wind-flower—his blood to the rose.

I mourn for Adonis—Adonis is dead.
Weep no more in the woods, Cytherea, thy lover !
So, well : make a place for his corse in thy bed,
With the purples thou sleepest in, under and over.
He 's fair though a corse—a fair corse, like a sleeper.
Lay him soft in the silks he had pleasure to fold
When, beside thee at night, holy dreams deep and
deeper
Enclosed his young life on the couch made of gold.
Love him still, poor Adonis ; cast on him together
The crowns and the flowers : since he died from the
place,
Why, let all die with him ; let the blossoms go wither,
Rain myrtles and olive-buds down on his face.
Rain the myrrh down, let all that is best fall a-pining,
Since the myrrh of his life from thy keeping is swept.
Pale he lay, thine Adonis, in purples reclining ;
The Loves raised their voices around him and wept.

They have shorn their bright curls off to cast on Adonis ;
 One treads on his bow,—on his arrows, another,—
 One breaks up a well-feathered quiver, and one is
 Bent low at a sandal, untying the strings,
 And one carries the vases of gold from the springs,
 While one washes the wound,—and behind them a
 brother
 Fans down on the body sweet air with his wings.

Cytherea herself now the Loves are lamenting.
 Each torch at the door Hymenæus blew out ;
 And, the marriage-wreath dropping its leaves as repenting,
 No more "Hymen, Hymen," is chanted about.
 But the *ai ai* instead—"ai alas" is begun
 For Adonis, and then follows "ai Hymenæus !"
 The Graces are weeping for Cinyris' son,
 Sobbing low each to each, "His fair eyes cannot see us !"
 Their wail strikes more shrill than the sadder Dioné's.
 The Fates mourn aloud for Adonis, Adonis,
 Deep chanting ; he hears not a word that they say :
 He *would* hear, but Persephoné has him in keeping.
 —Cease moan, Cytherea ! leave pomps for to-day,
 And weep new when a new year refits thee for weeping.



ILLUSTRATIONS OF ANTIQUE GEMS.

FROM APULEIUS.

PSYCHE GAZING ON CUPID.

(METAMORPH., Lib. IV.)

THEN Psyche, weak in body and soul, put on
 The cruelty of Fate, in place of strength :
 She raised the lamp to see what should be done,
 And seized the steel, and was a man at length

In courage, though a woman ! Yes, but when
 The light fell on the bed whereby she stood
 To view the "*beast*" that lay there,—certes, then,
 She saw the gentlest, sweetest beast in wood—
 Even Cupid's self, the beauteous god ! more beauteous
 For that sweet sleep across his eyelids dim.
 The light, the lady carried as she viewed,
 Did blush for pleasure as it lighted him,
 The dagger trembled from its aim unduteous ;
 And *she* . . oh, *she*—amazed and soul-distraught,
 And fainting in her whiteness like a veil,
 Slid down upon her knees, and, shuddering, thought
 To hide—though in her heart—the dagger pale !
 She would have done it, but her hands did fail
 To hold the guilty steel, they shivered so :
 And feeble, exhausted, unawares she took
 To gazing on the god, till, look by look,
 Her eyes with larger life did fill and glow.
 She saw his golden head alight with curls,—
 She might have guessed their brightness in the dark
 By that ambrosial smell of heavenly mark !
 She saw the milky brow, more pure than pearls,
 The purple of the cheeks, divinely sundered
 By the globed ringlets, as they glided free,
 Some back, some forwards,—all so radiantly,
 That, as she watched them there, she never wondered
 To see the lamplight, where it touched them, tremble ;
 On the god's shoulders, too, she marked his wings
 Shine faintly at the edges and resemble
 A flower that 's near to blow. The poet sings
 And lover sighs, that Love is fugitive ;
 And certes, though these pinions lay reposing,
 The feathers on them seemed to stir and live
 As if by instinct, closing and unclosing,
 Meantime the god's fair body slumbered deep,
 All worthy of Venus, in his shining sleep ;

While at the bed's foot lay the quiver, bow,
 And darts,—his arms of godhead. Psyche gazed
 With eyes that drank the wonders in,—said,—“Lo,
 Be these my husband's arms?”—and straightway raised
 An arrow from the quiver-case, and tried
 Its point against her finger,—trembling till
 She pushed it in too deeply (foolish bride !)
 And made her blood some dewdrops small distil,
 And learnt to love Love, of her own goodwill.

PSYCHE WAFTED BY ZEPHYRUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. IV.)

WHILE Psyche wept upon the rock forsaken,
 Alone, despairing, dreading,—gradually
 By Zephyrus she was enwapt and taken
 Still trembling,—like the lilies planted high,—
 Through all her fair white limbs. Her vesture spread,
 Her very bosom eddying with surprise,—
 He drew her slowly from the mountain-head,
 And bore her down the valleys with wet eyes,
 And laid her in the lap of a green dell
 As soft with grass and flowers as any nest,
 With trees beside her, and a limpid well :
 Yet Love was not far off from all that Rest.

PSYCHE AND PAN.

(METAMORPH., Lib. V.)

THE gentle River, in her Cupid's honour,
 Because he used to warm the very wave,
 Did ripple aside, instead of closing on her,
 And cast up Psyche, with a reflux brave,

Upon the flowery bank,—all sad and sinning.
 Then Pan, the rural god, by chance was leaning
 Along the brow of waters as they wound,
 Kissing the reed-nymph till she sank to ground,
 And teaching, without knowledge of the meaning,
 To run her voice in music after his
 Down many a shifting note : (the goats around,
 In wandering pasture and most leaping bliss,
 Drawn on to crop the river's flowery hair.)
 And as the hoary god beheld her there,
 The poor, worn, fainting Psyche !—knowing all
 The grief she suffered, he did gently call
 Her name, and softly comfort her despair :—

“ O wise, fair lady, I am rough and rude,
 And yet experienced through my weary age !
 And if I read aright, as soothsayer should,
 Thy faltering steps of heavy pilgrimage,
 Thy paleness, deep as snow we cannot see
 The roses through,—thy sighs of quick returning,
 Thine eyes that seem, themselves, two souls in mourn-
 ing—

Thou lovest, girl, too well and bitterly !
 But hear me : rush no more to a headlong fall :
 Seek no more deaths ! leave wail, lay sorrow down,
 And pray the sovran god ; and use withal
 Such prayer as best may suit a tender youth,
 Well-pleased to bend to flatteries from thy mouth
 And feel them stir the myrtle of his crown.”

—So spake the shepherd-god ; and answer none
 Gave Psyche in return : but silently
 She did him homage with a bended knee
 And took the onward path.

PSYCHE PROPITIATING CERES.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

THEN mother Ceres from afar beheld her,

While Psyche touched, with reverent fingers meek,
The temple's scythes ; and with a cry compelled her :—

“O wretched Psyche, Venus roams to seek
Thy wandering footsteps round the weary earth,
Anxious and maddened, and adjures thee forth

To accept the imputed pang, and let her wreak
Full vengeance with full force of deity !

Yet *thou*, forsooth, art in my temple here,
Touching my scythes, assuming my degree,

And daring to have thoughts that are not fear !”

—But Psyche clung to her feet, and as they moved

Rained tears along their track, tear, dropped on tear,
And drew the dust on in her trailing locks,

And still, with passionate prayer, the charge disproved :—

“Now, by thy right hand's gathering from the shocks
Of golden corn,—and by thy gladsome rites

Of harvest,—and thy consecrated sights

Shut safe and mute in chests,—and by the course

Of thy slave-dragons,—and the driving force

Of ploughs along Sicilian glebes profound,—

By thy swift chariot,—by thy steadfast ground, —

By all those nuptial torches that departed

With thy lost daughter,—and by those that shone

Back with her, when she came again glad-hearted,—

And by all other mysteries which are done

In silence at Eleusis,—I beseech thee,

O Ceres, take some pity, and abstain

From giving to my soul extremest pain

Who am the wretched Psyche ! Let me teach thee

A little mercy, and have thy leave to spend

A few days only in thy garnered corn,

Until that wrathful goddess, at the end,

Shall feel her hate grow mild, the longer borne,—
Or till—alas !—this faintness at my breast

Pass from me, and my spirit apprehend
From life-long woe a breath-time hour of rest !”
But Ceres answered, “ I am moved indeed

By prayers so moist with tears, and would defend
The poor beseecher from more utter need :

But where old oaths, anterior ties, commend,
I cannot fail to a sister, lie to a friend,
As Venus is to *me*. Depart with speed !”

PSYCHE AND THE EAGLE.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

BUT sovran Jove's rapacious Bird, the regal
High percher on the lightning, the great eagle
Drove down with rushing wings ; and,—thinking how,
By Cupid's help, he bore from Ida's brow
A cup-boy for his master,—he inclined
To yield, in just return, an influence kind ;
The god being honoured in his lady's woe.
And thus the Bird wheeled downward from the track,
Gods follow gods in, to the level low
Of that poor face of Psyche left in wrack.
—“ Now fie, thou simple girl !” the Bird began ;
“ For if thou think to steal and carry back
A drop of holiest stream that ever ran,
No simpler thought, methinks, were found in man.
What ! know'st thou not these Stygian waters be
Most holy, even to Jove ? that as, on earth,
Men swear by gods, and by the thunder's worth,
Even so the heavenly gods do utter forth
Their oaths by Styx's flowing majesty ?
And yet, one little urnful, I agree
To grant thy need !” Whereat, all hastily,

He takes it, fills it from the willing wave,
And bears it in his beak, incarnadined
By the last Titan-prey he screamed to have ;
And, striking calmly out, against the wind,
Vast wings on each side,—there, where Psyche stands,
He drops the urn down in her lifted hands.

PSYCHE AND CERBERUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

A MIGHTY dog with three colossal necks,
And heads in grand proportion ; vast as fear,
With jaws that bark the thunder out that breaks
In most innocuous dread for ghosts anear,
Who are safe in death from sorrow : he reclines
Across the threshold of queen Proserpine's
Dark-sweeping halls, and, there, for Pluto's spouse,
Doth guard the entrance of the empty house.
When Psyche threw the cake to him, once amain
He howled up wildly from his hunger-pain,
And was still, after.

PSYCHE AND PROSERPINE.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

THEN Psyche entered in to Proserpine
In the dark house, and straightway did decline
With meek denial the luxurious seat,
The liberal board for welcome strangers spread,
But sate down lowly at the dark queen's feet,
And told her tale, and brake her oaten bread.
And when she had given the pyx in humble duty,
And told how Venus did entreat the queen
To fill it up with only one day's beauty
She used in Hades, star-bright and serene,

To beautify the Cyprian, who had been
 All spoilt with grief in nursing her sick boy,—
 Then Proserpine, in malice and in joy,
 Smiled in the shade, and took the pyx, and put
 A secret in it ; and so, filled and shut,
 Gave it again to Psyche. Could she tell
 It held no beauty, but a dream of hell ?

PSYCHE AND VENUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

AND Psyche brought to Venus what was sent
 By Pluto's spouse ; the paler, that she went
 So low to seek it, down the dark descent.

MERCURY CARRIES PSYCHE TO OLYMPUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

THEN Jove commanded the god Mercury
 To float up Psyche from the earth. And she
 Sprang at the first word, as the fountain springs,
 And shot up bright and rustling through his wings.

MARRIAGE OF PSYCHE AND CUPID.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

AND Jove's right-hand approached the ambrosial bowl
 To Psyche's lips, that scarce dared yet to smile,—
 " Drink, O my daughter, and acquaint thy soul
 With deathless uses, and be glad the while !
 No more shall Cupid leave thy lovely side ;
 Thy marriage-joy begins for never ending."
 While yet he spake,—the nuptial feast supplied,—
 The bridegroom on the festive couch was bending

O'er Psyche in his bosom—Jove, the same,
 On Juno, and the other deities,
 Alike ranged round. The rural cup-boy came
 And poured Jove's nectar out with shining eyes,
 While Bacchus, for the others did as much,
 And Vulcan spread the meal ; and all the Hours
 Made all things purple with a sprinkle of flowers,
 Or roses chiefly, not to say the touch
 Of their sweet fingers ; and the Graces glided
 Their balm around, and the Muses, through the air,
 Struck out clear voices, which were still divided
 By that divinest song Apollo there
 Intoned to his lute ; while Aphrodite fair
 Did float her beauty along the tune, and play
 The notes right with her feet. And thus, the day
 Through every perfect mood of joy was carried.
 The Muses sang their chorus ; Satyrus
 Did blow his pipes ; Pan touched his reed ;—and thus
 At last were Cupid and his Psyche married.

FROM NONNUS.

HOW BACCHUS FINDS ARIADNE SLEEPING.

(DIONYSIACA, Lib. XLVII.)

WHEN Bacchus first beheld the desolate
 And sleeping Ariadne, wonder straight
 Was mixed with love in his great golden eyes ;
 He turned to his Bacchantes in surprise,
 And said with guarded voice,—“ Hush ! strike no more
 Your brazen cymbals ; keep those voices still
 Of voice and pipe ; and since ye stand before
 Queen Cypris, let her slumber as she will !
 And yet the cestus is not here in proof.
 A Grace, perhaps, whom sleep has stolen aloof :

In which case, as the morning shines in view,
 Wake this Aglaia !—yet in Naxos, who
 Would veil a grace so ? Hush ! And if that she
 Were Hebe, which of all the gods can be
 The pourer-out of wine ? or if we think
 She 's like the shining moon by ocean's brink,
 The guide of herds,—why, could she sleep without
 Endymion's breath on her cheek ! or if I doubt
 Of silver-footed Thetis, used to tread
 These shores,—even *she* (in reverence be it said)
 Has no such rosy beauty to dress deep
 With the blue waves. The Loxian goddess might
 Repose so from her hunting-toil aright
 Beside the sea, since toil gives birth to sleep,
 But who would find her with her tunic loose,
 Thus ? Stand off, Thracian ! stand off ! Do not leap,
 Not this way ! Leave that piping, since I choose,
 O dearest Pan, and let Athenè rest !
 And yet if she be Pallas . . . truly guessed . .
 Her lance is—where ? her helm and ægis—where ? ”
 —As Bacchus closed, the miserable Fair
 Awoke at last, sprang upward from the sands,
 And gazing wild on that wild throng that stands
 Around, around her, and no Theseus there !—
 Her voice went moaning over shore and sea,
 Beside the halcyon's cry ; she called her love ;
 She named her hero, and ragèd maddeningly
 Against the brine of waters ; and above,
 Sought the ship's track, and cursed the hours she slept ;
 And still the chiefest execration swept
 Against queen Paphia, mother of the ocean ;
 And cursed and prayed by times in her emotion
 The winds all round.

 Her grief did make her glorious ; her despair
 Adorned her with its weight. Poor wailing child !

She looked like Venus when the goddess smiled
 At liberty of godship, debonair ;
 Poor Ariadne ! and her eyelids fair
 Hid looks beneath them lent her by Persuasion
 And every Grace, with tears of Love's own passion.
 She wept long ; then she spake :—" Sweet sleep did come
 While sweetest Theseus went. O, glad and dumb,
 I wish he had left me still ! for in my sleep
 I saw his Athens, and did gladly keep
 My new bride-state within my Theseus' hall !
 And heard the pomp of Hymen, and the call
 Of ' Ariadne, Ariadne,' sung
 In choral joy ; and there, with joy I hung
 Spring-blossoms round love's altar !—ay, and wore
 A wreath myself ; and felt *him* evermore,
 Oh, evermore beside me, with his mighty
 Grave head bowed down in prayer to Aphrodité !
 Why, what a sweet, sweet dream ! *He* went with it
 And left me here unwedded where I sit.
 Persuasion help me ! The dark night did make me
 A brideship, the fair morning takes away ;
 My Love had left me when the Hour did wake me ;
 And while I dreamed of marriage, as I say,
 And blest it well, my blessèd Theseus left me :
 And thus the sleep, I loved so, has bereft me.
 Speak to me, rocks, and tell thy grief to-day,
 Who stole my love of Athens ? " . .

HOW BACCHUS COMFORTS ARIADNE.

(DIONYSIACA, Lib. XLVII.)

THEN Bacchus' subtle speech her sorrow crossed :—
 " O maiden, dost thou mourn for having lost
 The false Athenian heart ? and dost thou still
 Take thought of Theseus, when thou may'st at will

Have Bacchus for a husband? Bacchus bright!

A god in place of mortal! Yes, and though
The mortal youth be charming in thy sight,
That man of Athens cannot strive, below
In beauty and valour, with my deity!

Thou 'lt tell me of the labyrinthine dweller,
The fierce man-bull he slew: I pray thee, be,
Fair Ariadne, the true deed's true teller,
And mention thy clue's help! because, forsooth,
Thine armed Athenian hero had not found
A power to fight on that prodigious ground,
Unless a lady in her rosy youth

Had lingered near him: not to speak the truth
Too definitely out till names be known—
Like Paphia's—Love's—and Ariadne's own.
Thou wilt not say that Athens can compare

With Æther, nor that Minos rules like Zeus,
Nor yet that Gnossus has such golden air
As high Olympus. Ha! for noble use
We came to Naxos! Love has well intended
To change thy bridegroom! Happy thou, defended
From entering in thy Theseus' earthly hall,
That thou may'st hear the laughters rise and fall

Instead, where Bacchus rules! Or wilt thou choose
A still-surpassing glory?—take it all,—
A heavenly house, Kronion's self for kin,—
A place where Cassiopeia sits within
Inferior light, for all her daughter's sake,
Since Perseus, even amid the stars, must take
Andromeda in chains æthereal!

But I will wreathe *thee*, sweet, an astral crown,
And as my queen and spouse thou shalt be known—
Mine, the crown-lover's!" Thus, at length, he proved
His comfort on her; and the maid was moved;
And casting Theseus' memory down the brine,
She straight received the troth of her divine

Fair Bacchus ; Love stood by to close the rite.
 The marriage-chorus struck up clear and light,
 Flowers sprouted fast about the chamber green,
 And with spring-garlands on their heads, I ween,
 The Orchomenian dancers came along
 And danced their rounds in Naxos to the song.
 A Hamadryad sang a nuptial dit
 Right shrilly : and a Naiad sat beside
 A fountain, with her bare foot shelving it,
 And hymned of Ariadne, beauteous bride,
 Whom thus the god of grapes had deified.
 Ortygia sang out, louder than her wont,
 An ode which Phœbus gave her to be tried,
 And leapt in chorus, with her steadfast front,
 While prophet Love, the stars have called a brother,
 Burnt in his crown, and twined in one another
 His love-flower with the purple roses, given
 In type of that new crown assigned in heaven.

FROM HESIOD.

BACCHUS AND ARIADNE.

(THEOG. 947.)

THE golden-hair'd Bacchus did espouse
 That fairest Ariadne, Minos' daughter,
 And made her wifhood blossom in the house ;
 Where such protective gifts Kronion brought her
 Nor Death nor Age could find her when they sought her.

FROM HOMER.

HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE.

(ILIAD, Lib. VI.)

SHE rushed to meet him : the nurse following
 Bore on her bosom the unsaddened child,

A simple babe, prince Hector's well-loved son,
 Like a star shining when the world is dark :
 Scamandrius, Hector called him ; but the rest
 Named him Astyanax, the city's prince,
 Because that Hector, only, had saved Troy.
 He, when he saw his son, smiled silently ;
 While, dropping tears, Andromache pressed on,
 And clung to his hand, and spake, and named his name.

" Hector, my best one,—thine own nobleness
 Must needs undo thee. Pity hast thou none
 For this young child, and this most sad myself,
 Who soon shall be thy widow—since that soon
 The Greeks will slay thee in the general rush—
 And then, for me, what refuge, 'reft of *thee*,
 But to go graveward ? Then, no comfort more
 Shall touch me, as in the old sad times thou know'st—
 Grief only—grief ! I have no father now,
 No mother mild ! Achilles the divine,
He slew my father, sacked his lofty Thebes,
 Cilicia's populous city, and slew its king,
 Eëtion—father !—did not spoil the corse,
 Because the Greek revered him in his soul,
 But burnt the body with its dædal arms,
 And poured the dust out gently. Round that tomb
 The Oreads, daughters of the goat-nursed Zeus,
 Tripped in a ring, and planted their green elms.
 There were seven brothers with me in the house,
 Who all went down to Hades in one day,—
 For *he* slew all, Achilles the divine,
 Famed for his swift feet,—slain among their herds
 Of cloven-footed bulls and flocking sheep !
 My mother too, who queened it o'er the woods
 Of Hippoplacia, he, with other spoil,
 Seized,—and, for golden ransom, freed too late,—
 Since, as she went home, arrowy Artemis

Met her and slew her at my father's door.
 But—oh my Hector,—thou art still to me
 Father and mother !—yes, and brother dear,
 O thou, who art my sweetest spouse beside !
 Come now, and take me into pity ! Stay
 I' the town here with us ! Do not make thy child
 An orphan, nor a widow, thy poor wife !
 Call up the people to the fig-tree, where
 The city is most accessible, the wall
 Most easy of assault !—for thrice thereby
 The boldest Greeks have mounted to the breach,—
 Both Ajaxes, the famed Idomeneus,
 Two sons of Atreus, and the noble one
 Of Tydeus,—whether taught by some wise seer,
 Or by their own souls prompted and inspired.”

Great Hector answered :—“ Lady, for these things
 It is my part to care. And I fear most
 My Trojans, and their daughters, and their wives,
 Who through their long veils would glance scorn at me
 If, coward-like, I shunned the open war.
 Nor doth my own soul prompt me to that end !
 I learnt to be a brave man constantly,
 And to fight foremost where my Trojans fight,
 And vindicate my father's glory and mine—
 Because I know, by instinct and my soul,
 The day comes that our sacred Troy must fall,
 And Priam and his people. Knowing which,
 I have no such grief for all my Trojans' sake,
 For Hecuba's, for Priam's, our old king,
 Not for my brothers', who so many and brave
 Shall bite the dust before our enemies,—
 As, sweet, for *thee* !—to think some mail'd Greek
 Shall lead thee weeping and deprive thy life
 Of the free sun-sight—that, when gone away
 To Argos, thou shalt throw the distaff there,

Not for thy uses—or shalt carry instead
 Upon thy loathing brow, as heavy as doom,
 The water of Greek wells—Messeis' own,
 Or Hyperea's !—that some stander-by,
 Marking my tears fall, shall say, ' This is She,
 The wife of that same Hector who fought best
 Of all the Trojans, when all fought for Troy—'
 Ay !—and, so speaking, shall renew thy pang
 That, 'reft of Him so named, thou shouldst survive
 To a slave's life ! But earth shall hide my corse
 Ere that shriek sound, wherewith thou art dragged from
 Troy."

Thus Hector spake, and stretched his arms to his child.
 Against the nurse's breast, with childly cry,
 The boy clung back, and shunned his father's face,
 And feared the glittering brass and waving hair
 Of the high helmet, nodding horror down.
 The father smiled, the mother could not choose
 But smile too. Then he lifted from his brow
 The helm, and set it on the ground to shine :
 Then, kissed his dear child—raised him with both arms,
 And thus invoked Zeus and the general gods :—

" Zeus, and all godships ! grant this boy of mine
 To be the Trojans' help, as I myself,—
 To live a brave life and rule well in Troy !
 Till men shall say, ' The son exceeds the sire
 By a far glory.' Let him bring home spoil
 Heroic, and make glad his mother's heart."

With which prayer, to his wife's extended arms
 He gave the child ; and she received him straight
 To her bosom's fragrance—smiling up her tears.
 Hector gazed on her till his soul was moved ;
 'Then softly touched her with his hand and spake.
 'My best one—'ware of passion and excess

In any fear. There's no man in the world
 Can send me to the grave apart from fate,—
 And no man . . . Sweet, I tell thee . . . can fly fate—
 No good nor bad man. Doom is self-fulfilled.
 But now, go home, and ply thy woman's task
 Of wheel and distaff! bid thy maidens haste
 Their occupation. War's a care for men—
 For all men born in Troy, and chief for me."

Thus spake the noble Hector, and resumed
 His crested helmet, while his spouse went home;
 But as she went, still looked back lovingly,
 Dropping the tears from her reverted face.

THE DAUGHTERS OF PANDARUS.

(*Odys.*, Lib. XX.)

AND so these daughters fair of Pandarus,
 The whirlwinds took, The gods had slain their kin:
 They were left orphans in their father's house.
 And Aphroditè came to comfort them
 With incense, luscious honey, and fragrant wine;
 And Herè gave them beauty of face and soul
 Beyond all women; purest Artemis
 Endowed them with her stature and white grace;
 And Pallas taught their hands to flash along
 Her famous looms. Then, bright with deity,
 Toward far Olympus, Aphroditè went
 To ask of Zeus (who has his thunder-joys
 And his full knowledge of man's mingled fate)
 How best to crown those other gifts with love
 And worthy marriage: but, what time she went,
 The ravishing Harpies snatched the maids away,
 And gave them up, for all their loving eyes,
 To serve the Furies who hate constantly.

ANOTHER VERSION.

So the storms bore the daughters of Pandarus out into
 thrall—
 The gods slew their parents ; the orphans were left in
 the hall.
 And there came, to feed their young lives, Aphroditè
 divine,
 With the incense, the sweet-tasting honey, the sweet-
 smelling wine
 Herè brought them her wit above woman's, and beauty
 of face ;
 And pure Artemis gave them her stature, that form might
 have grace :
 And Athenè instructed their hands in her works of
 renown ;
 Then, afar to Olympus, divine Aphroditè moved on.
 To complete other gifts, by uniting each girl to a mate,
 She sought Zeus, who has joy in the thunder and know-
 ledge of fate,
 Whether mortals have good chance or ill. But the
 Harpies alate
 In the storm came, and swept off the maidens, and gave
 them to wait,
 With that love in their eyes, on the Furies who constantly
 hate.

 FROM EURIPIDES.

AURORA AND TITHONUS.

(TROADES, ANTISTROPHE, 853.)

LOVE, Love, who once didst pass the Dardan portals,
 Because of Heavenly passion !
 Who once didst lift up Troy in exultation,
 To mingle in thy bond the high Immortals !—

Love, turned from his own name
 To Zeus's shame,
 Can help no more at all.
 And Eos's self, the fair, white-steeded Morning,—
Her light which blesses other lands, returning,
 Has changed to a gloomy pall !
 She looked across the land with eyes of amber,—
 She saw the city's fall,—
 She who, in pure embraces,
 Had held there, in the hymeneal chamber,
 Her children's father, bright Tithonus old,
 Whom the four steeds with starry brows and paces
 Bore on, snatched upward, on the car of gold,
 And with him, all the land's full hope of joy !
 The love-charms of the gods are vain for Troy.

NOTE.—Rendered after Mr. Burges' reading, in some respects—
 not quite all.

HEAVEN AND EARTH.

"And there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour."
Revelation.

GOD, who with thunders and great voices kept
 Beneath Thy throne, and stars most silver-paced
 Along the inferior gyres, and open-faced
 Melodious angels round,—canst intercept
 Music with music,—yet, at will, hast swept
 All back, all back, (said he in Patmos placed)
 To fill the heavens with silence of the waste
 Which lasted half an hour !—lo, I who have wept
 All day and night, beseech Thee by my tears,
 And by that dread response of curse and groan
 Men alternate across these hemispheres,
 Vouchsafe us such a half-hour's hush alone,
 In compensation for our stormy years :
 As heaven has paused from song, let earth from moan !

THE PROSPECT.

METHINKS we do as fretful children do,
Leaning their faces on the window-pane
To sigh the glass dim with their own breath's stain,
And shut the sky and landscape from their view :
And thus, alas, since God the maker drew
A mystic separation 'twixt those twain,
The life beyond us, and our souls in pain,
We miss the prospect which we are called unto
By grief we are fools to use. Be still and strong,
O man, my brother ! hold thy sobbing breath,
And keep thy soul's large window pure from wrong :
That so, as life's appointment issueth,
Thy vision may be clear to watch, along
The sunset, consummation-lights of death.



PAST AND FUTURE.

My future will not copy fair my past
On any leaf but Heaven's. Be fully done,
Supernal Will ! I would not fain be one
Who, satisfying thirst and breaking fast,
Upon the fulness of the heart at last
Says no grace after meat. My wine has run .
Indeed out of my cup, and there is none
To gather up the bread of my repast
Scattered and trampled ; yet I find some good
In earth's green herbs, and streams that bubble up
Clear from the darkling ground,—content until
I sit with angels before better food :
Dear Christ ! when Thy new vintage fills my cup,
This hand shall shake no more, nor that wine spill.

IRREPARABLENESS.

I HAVE been in the meadows all the day
And gathered there the nosegay that you see,
Singing within myself as bird or bee
When such do field-work on a morn of May.
But, now I look upon my flowers, decay
Has met them in my hands more fatally
Because more warmly clasped,—and sobs are free
To come instead of songs. What do you say,
Sweet counsellors, dear friends? that I should go
Back straightway to the fields and gather more?
Another, sooth, may do it, but not I!
My heart is very tired, my strength is low,
My hands are full of blossoms plucked before,
Held dead within them till myself shall die.

*A DENIAL.*

WE have met late—it is too late to meet,
O friend, not more than friend!
Death's forecome shroud is tangled round my feet,
And if I step or stir, I touch the end.
In this last jeopardy
Can I approach thee, I, who cannot move?
How shall I answer thy request for love?
Look in my face and see.

I love thee not, I dare not love thee! go
In silence; drop my hand.
If thou seek roses, seek them where they blow
In garden-alleys, not in desert-sand.
Can life and death agree,
That thou shouldst stoop thy song to my complaint?

I cannot love thee. If the word is faint,
Look in my face and see.

I might have loved thee in some former days.

Oh, then, my spirits had leapt
As now they sink, at hearing thy love-praise !
Before these faded cheeks were overwept,
Had this been asked of me.

To love thee with my whole strong heart and head,—
I should have said still . . . yes, but *smiled* and said,
“ Look in my face and see ! ”

But now . . . God sees me, God, who took my heart
And drowned it in life's surge.

In all your wide warm earth I have no part—
A light song overcomes me like a dirge.

Could Love's great harmony
The saints keep step to when their bonds are loose,
Not weigh me down ? am I a wife to choose ?
Look in my face and see—

While I behold, as plain as one who dreams,
Some woman of full worth,
Whose voice, as cadenced as a silver stream's,
Shall prove the fountain-soul which sends it forth
One younger, more thought-free
And fair and gay than I thou must forget,
With brighter eyes than these . . . which are not wet
Look in my face and see !

So farewell thou, whom I have known too late
To let thee come so near.

Be counted happy while men call thee great,
And one beloved woman feels thee dear !—

Not I !—that cannot be.

I am lost, I am changed,—I must go farther, where
The change shall take me worse, and no one dare
Look in my face and see.

Meantime I bless thee. By these thoughts of mine
 I bless thee from all such !
 I bless thy lamp to oil, thy cup to wine,
 Thy hearth to joy, thy hand to an equal touch
 Of loyal troth. For me,
 I love thee not, I love thee not !—away !
 Here 's no more courage in my soul to say
 “ Look in my face and see.”



PROOF AND DISPROOF.

DOST thou love me, my Belovéd ?
 Who shall answer yes or no ?
 What is provéd or disprovéd
 When my soul inquireth so,
 Dost thou love me, my Belovéd ?

I have seen thy heart to-day,
 Never open to the crowd,
 While to love me aye and aye
 Was the vow as it was vowed
 By thine eyes of steadfast grey.

Now I sit alone, alone—
 And the hot tears break and burn.
 Now, Belovéd, thou art gone,
 Doubt and terror have their turn.
 Is it love that I have known ?

I have known some bitter things,—
 Anguish, anger, solitude.
 Year by year an evil brings,
 Year by year denies a good ;
 March winds violate my springs.

I have known how sickness bends,
I have known how sorrow breaks,—
How quick hopes have sudden ends,
How the heart thinks till it aches
Of the smile of buried friends.

Last, I have known *thee*, my brave
Noble thinker, lover, doer !
The best knowledge last I have.
But thou comest as the thrower
Of fresh flowers upon a grave.

Count what feelings used to move me !
Can this love assort with those ?
Thou, who art so far above me,
Wilt thou stoop so, for repose ?
Is it true that thou canst love me ?

Do not blame me if I doubt thee.
I can call love by its name
When thine arm is wrapt about me ;
But even love seems not the same,
When I sit alone, without thee.

In thy clear eyes I descried
Many a proof of love, to-day ;
But to-night, those unbelied
Speechful eyes being gone away
There 's the proof to seek, beside.

Dost thou love me, my Belovéd ?
Only *thou* canst answer yes !
And, thou gone, the proof 's disprovèd,
And the cry rings answerless—
Dost thou love me, my Belovéd ?



LIFE AND LOVE.

FAST this Life of mine was dying,
Blind already and calm as death,
Snowflakes on her bosom lying
Scarcely heaving with her breath.

Love came by, and having known her
In a dream of fabled lands,
Gently stooped, and laid upon her
Mystic chrism of holy hands ;

Drew his smile across her folded
Eyelids, as the swallow dips ;
Breathed as finely as the cold did,
Through the locking of her lips.

So, when Life looked upward, being
Warmed and breathed on from above,
What sight could she have for seeing,
Evermore . . . but only LOVE?

*A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS.*

SHE has laughed as softly as if she sighed,
She has counted six, and over,
Of a purse well filled, and a heart well tried—
Oh, each a worthy lover !
They "give her time ;" for her soul must slip
Where the world has set the grooving :
She will lie to none with her fair red lip—
But love seeks truer loving.

She trembles her fan in a sweetness dumb,
As her thoughts were beyond recalling,
With a glance for *one*, and a glance for *some*,
From her eyelids rising and falling ;
Speaks common words with a blushful air,
Hears bold words, unreproving ;
But her silence says—what she never will swear—
And love seeks better loving.

Go, lady, lean to the night-guitar
And drop a smile to the bringer,
Then smile as sweetly, when he is far,
At the voice of an in-door singer.
Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes ;
Glance lightly, on their removing ;
And join new vows to old perjuries—
But dare not call it loving.

Unless you can think, when the song is done,
No other is soft in the rhythm ;
Unless you can feel, when left by One,
That all men else go with him ;
Unless you can know, when unpraised by his breath,
That your beauty itself wants proving ;
Unless you can swear, "For life, for death !"—
Oh, fear to call it loving !

Unless you can muse in a crowd all day,
On the absent face that fixed you ;
Unless you can love, as the angels may,
With the breadth of heaven betwixt you ;
Unless you can dream that his faith is fast,
Through behoving and unbehoving ;
Unless you can *die* when the dream is past—
Oh, never call it loving !

SOUNDS.

ἤκουσας ἢ οὐκ ἤκουσας ; —
ÆSCHYLUS.

HARKEN, harken !
The rapid river carrieth
Many noises underneath
The hoary ocean :
Teaching his solemnity
Sounds of inland life and glee
Learnt beside the waving tree
When the winds in summer prank
Toss the shades from bank to bank,
And the quick rains, in emotion
Which rather gladdens earth than grieves,
Count and visibly rehearse
The pulses of the universe
Upon the summer leaves—
Learnt among the lilies straight,
When they bow them to the weight
Of many bees whose hidden hum
Seemeth from themselves to come—
Learnt among the grasses green
Where the rustling mice are seen
By the gleaming, as they run,
Of their quick eyes in the sun ;
And lazy sheep are browsing through
With their noses trailed in dew ;
And the squirrel leaps adown
Holding fast the filbert brown ;
And the lark, with more of mirth
In his song than suits the earth,
Droppeth some in soaring high,
To pour the rest out in the sky ;
While the woodland doves apart
In the copse's leafy heart,
Solitary, not ascetic,

Hidden and yet vocal, seem
Joining, in a lovely psalm,
Man's despondence, nature's calm,
Half mystical and half pathetic,
Like a singing in a dream.
All these sounds the river telleth,
Softened to an undertone
Which ever and anon he swelleth
By a burden of his own,
In the ocean's ear :
Ay, and ocean seems to hear
With an inward gentle scorn,
Smiling to his caverns worn.

Harken, harken !
The child is shouting at his play
Just in the tramping funeral's way ;
The widow moans as she turns aside
To shun the face of the blushing bride
While, shaking the tower of the ancient church,
The marriage bells do swing ;
And in the shadow of the porch
An idiot sits with his lean hands full
Of hedgerow flowers and a poet's skull,
Laughing loud and gibbering
Because it is so brown a thing,
While he sticketh the gaudy poppies red
In and out the senseless head
Where all sweet fancies grew instead.
And you may hear at the self-same time
Another poet who reads his rhyme,
Low as a brook in summer air,
Save when he droppeth his voice adown
To dream of the amaranthine crown
His mortal brows shall wear :
And a baby cries with a feeble sound

'Neath the weary weight of the life new-found,
And an old man groans,—with his testament
Only half-signed,—for the life that 's spent ;
And lovers twain do softly say,
As they sit on a grave, "For aye, for aye ;"
And foemen twain, while Earth their mother
Looks greenly upward, curse each other :
A school-boy drones his task, with looks
Cast over the page to the elm-tree rooks ;
A lonely student cries aloud
Eureka ! clasping at his shroud ;
A beldame's age-cracked voice doth sing
To a little infant slumbering ;
A maid forgotten weeps alone,
Muffling her sobs on the trysting-stone ;
A sick man wakes at his own mouth's wail,
A gossip coughs in her thrice-told tale,
A muttering gamester shakes the dice,
A reaper foretells good luck from the skies,
A monarch vows as he lifts his hand to them ;
A patriot, leaving his native land to them,
Cries to the world against perjured state ;
A priest disserts
Upon linen skirts,
A sinner screams for one hope more,
A dancer's feet do palpitate
A piper's music out on the floor ;
And nigh to the awful Dead, the living
Low speech and stealthy steps are giving,
Because he cannot hear ;
And *he* who on that narrow bier
Has room enough, is closely wound
In a silence piercing more than sound.

Harken, harken !
God speaketh to thy soul,

Using the súpreme voice which doth confound
All life with consciousness of Deity,
 All senses into one,—
As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving John
 (For whom did backward roll
The cloud-gate of the future) turned to *see*
The Voice which spake. It speaketh now,
Through the regular breath of the calm creation,
Through the moan of the creature's desolation
Striking, and in its stroke resembling
The memory of a solemn vow
Which pierceth the din of a festival
To one in the midst,—and he letteth fall
 The cup with a sudden trembling.

 Harken, harken !
 God speaketh in thy soul,
 Saying " O thou that movest
With feeble steps across this earth of Mine,
To break beside the fount thy golden bowl
 And spill its purple wine,—
Look up to heaven and see how, like a scroll,
My right hand hath thine immortality
In an eternal grasping ! thou, that lovest
The songful birds and grasses underfoot,
And also what change mars and tombs pollute—
I am the end of love ! give love to Me !
O thou that sinnest, grace doth more abound
Than all thy sin ! sit still beneath My rood,
And count the droppings of My victim-blood,
 And seek none other sound !"

 Harken, harken !
Shall we hear the lapsing river
And our brother's sighing ever,
 And not the voice of God ?

WHERE'S AGNES?

NAY, if I had come back so,
And found her dead in her grave,
And if a friend I know
Had said, "Be strong, nor rave :
She lies there, dead below :

"I saw her, I who speak,
White, stiff, the face one blank :
The blue shade came to her cheek
Before they nailed the plank,
For she had been dead a week."

Why, if he had spoken so,
I might have believed the thing,
Although her look, although
Her step, laugh, voice's ring
Lived in me still as they do.

But dead that other way,
Corrupted thus and lost ?
That sort of worm in the clay ?
I cannot count the cost,
That I should rise and pay.

My Agnes false ? such shame ?
She ? Rather be it said
That the pure saint of her name
Has stood there in her stead,
And tricked you to this blame.

Her very gown, her cloak
Fell chastely : no disguise,
But expression ! while she broke
With her clear grey morning-eyes
Full upon me and then spoke.

She wore her hair away
From her forehead,—like a cloud
Which a little wind in May
Peels off finely : disallowed
Though bright enough to stay.

For the heavens must have the place
To themselves, to use and shine in,
As her soul would have her face
To press through upon mine, in
That orb of angel grace.

Had she any fault at all,
'T was having none, I thought too :
There seemed a sort of thrall ;
As she felt her shadow ought to
Fall straight upon the wall.

Her sweetness strained the sense
Of common life and duty ;
And every day's expense
Of moving in such beauty
Required, almost, defence.

What good, I thought, is done
By such sweet things, if any?
This world smells ill i' the sun
Though the garden-flowers are many,—
She is only one.

Can a voice so low and soft
Take open actual part
With Right,—maintain aloft
Pure truth in life or art,
Vexed always, wounded oft?

She fit, with that fair pose
Which melts from curve to curve,

To stand, run, work with those
Who wrestle and deserve,
And speak plain without glose?

But I turned round on my fear
Defiant, disagreeing ;
What if God has set her here
Less for action than for Being?—
For the eye and for the ear.

Just to show what beauty may,
Just to prove what music can,—
And then to die away
From the presence of a man,
Who shall learn, henceforth, to pray?

As a door, left half ajar
In heaven, would make him think
How heavenly-different are
Things glanced at through the chink,
Till he pined from near to far.

That door could lead to hell?
That shining merely meant
Damnation? What! She fell
Like a woman, who was sent
Like an angel, by a spell?

She, who scarcely trod the earth,
Turned mere dirt? My Agnes,—mine!
Called so! felt of too much worth
To be used so! too divine
To be breathed near, and so forth!

Why, I dared not name a sin
In her presence: I went round,
Clipped its name and shut it in
Some mysterious crystal sound,—
Changed the dagger for the pin.

Now you name herself *that word*?
O my Agnes ! O my saint !
Then the great joys of the Lord
Do not last ? Then all this paint
Runs off nature ? leaves a board ?

Who's dead here ? No, not she :
Rather I ! or whence this damp
Cold corruption's misery ?
While my very mourners stamp
Closer in the clods on me.

And my mouth is full of dust
Till I cannot speak and curse—
Speak and damn him . . . " Blame's unjust ?
Sin blots out the universe,
All because she would and must ? "

She, my white rose, dropping off
The high rose-tree branch ! and not
That the night-wind blew too rough,
Or the noon-sun burnt too hot,
But, that being a rose—'t was enough !

Then henceforth, may earth grow trees !
No more roses !—hard straight lines
To score lies out ! none of these
Fluctuant curves, but firs and pines,
Poplars, cedars, cypresses !



FROM HEINE.

I.

OUT of my own great woe
I make my little songs,
Which rustle their feathers in throngs
And beat on her heart even so.

They found the way, for their part,
Yet come again, and complain,
Complain, and are not fain
To say what they saw in her heart.

II.

ART thou indeed so adverse?
Art thou so changed indeed?
Against the woman who wrongs me
I cry to the world in my need.

O recreant lips unthankful,
How could ye speak evil, say,
Of the man who so well has kissed you
On many a fortunate day?

III.

MY child, we were two children,
Small, merry by childhood's law;
We used to crawl to the hen-house
And hide ourselves in the straw.

We crowed like cocks, and whenever
The passers near us drew—
Cock-a-doodle! they thought
'T was a real cock that crew.

The boxes about our courtyard
We carpeted to our mind,
And lived there both together—
Kept house in a noble kind.

The neighbour's old cat often
Came to pay us a visit ;
We made her a bow and curtsey,
Each with a compliment in it.

After her health we asked,
Our care and regard to evince—
(We have made the very same speeches
To many an old cat since).

We also sat and wisely
Discoursed, as old folks do,
Complaining how all went better
In those good times we knew,—

How love and truth and believing
Had left the world to itself,
And how so dear was the coffee,
And how so rare was the pelf.

The children's games are over,
The rest is over with youth—
The world, the good games, the good times,
The belief, and the love, and the truth.

IV.

THOU lovest me not, thou lovest me not !
'T is scarcely worth a sigh :
Let me look in thy face, and no king in his place
Is a gladder man than I.

Thou hatest me well, thou hatest me well—
Thy little red mouth has told :
Let it reach me a kiss, and, however it is,
My child, I am well consoled.

V.

MY own sweet Love, if thou in the grave,
The darksome grave, wilt be,
Then will I go down by the side, and crave
Love-room for thee and me.

I kiss and caress and press thee wild,
Thou still, thou cold, thou white !
I wail, I tremble, and weeping mild,
Turn to a corpse at the sight.

The Dead stand up, the midnight calls,
They dance in airy swarms—
We two keep still where the grave-shade falls,
And I lie on in thine arms.

The Dead stand up, the Judgment-day
Bids such to weal or woe—
But nought shall trouble us where we stay
Embraced and embracing below.

VI.

THE years they come and go,
The races drop in the grave,
Yet never the love doth so,
Which here in my heart I have.

Could I see thee but once, one day,
And sink down so on my knee,
And die in thy sight while I say,
"Lady, I love but thee!"

THE SWORD OF CASTRUCCIO CASTRACANI.

"*Questa è per me.*"—KING VICTOR EMANUEL.

WHEN Victor Emanuel the King,
Went down to his Lucca that day,
The people, each vaunting the thing
As he gave it, gave all things away,—
In a burst of fierce gratitude, say,
As they tore out their hearts for the King.

—Gave the green forest-walk on the wall,
With the Apennine blue through the trees ;
Gave the palaces, churches, and all
The great pictures which burn out of these :
But the eyes of the King seemed to freeze
As he gazed upon ceiling and wall.

"Good," said the King as he passed.
Was he cold to the arts?—or else coy
To possession? or crossed, at the last,
(Whispered some) by the vote in Savoy?
Shout ! Love him enough for his joy !
"Good," said the King as he passed.

He, travelling the whole day through flowers
And protesting amenities, found
At Pistoia, betwixt the two showers
Of red roses, the "Orphans," (renowned
As the heirs of Puccini) who wound
With a sword through the crowd and the flowers.

" 'T is the sword of Castruccio, O King,—
In that strife of intestinal hate,
Very famous ! Accept what we bring,
We who cannot be sons, by our fate,
Rendered citizens by thee of late,
And endowed with a country and king.

" Read ! Puccini has willed that this sword
(Which once made in an ignorant feud
Many orphans) remain in our ward
Till some patriot its pure civic blood
Wipe away in the foe's and make good,
In delivering the land by the sword."

Then the King exclaimed, " This is for *me* !"
And he dashed out his hand on the hilt,
While his blue eye shot fire openly,
And his heart overboiled till it spilt
A hot prayer,— " God ! the rest as thou wilt !
But grant me this !—*This* is for *me*."

O Victor Emanuel, the King,
The sword is for *thee*, and the deed,
And nought for the alien, next spring,
Nought for Hapsburg and Bourbon agreed—
But for us, a great Italy freed,
With a hero to head us—our King !



SUMMING UP IN ITALY.

(INSCRIBED TO INTELLIGENT PUBLICS OUT OF IT.)

OBSERVE how it will be at last,
When our Italy stands at full stature,
A year ago tied down so fast
That the cord cut the quick of her nature !

You 'll honour the deed and its scope,
 Then, in logical sequence upon it,
 Will use up the remnants of rope
 By hanging the men who have done it.

The speech in the Commons, which hits you
 A sketch off, how dungeons must feel,—
 The official despatch, which commits you
 From stamping out groans with your heel,—
 Suggestions in journal or book for
 Good efforts,—are praised as is meet :
 But what in this world can men look for
 Who only achieve and complete ?

True, you 've praise for the fireman who sets his
 Brave face to the axe of the flame,
 Disappears in the smoke, and then fetches
 A babe down, or idiot that 's lame,—
 For the boor even, who rescues through pity
 A sheep from the brute who would kick it :
 But saviours of nations !—'t is pretty,
 And doubtful : they *may* be so wicked :

Azeglio, Farini, Mamiani,
 Ricasoli,—doubt by the dozen !—here 's
 Pepoli too, and Cipriani,
 Imperial cousins and cozeners—
 Arese, Laiatico,—courtly
 Of manners, if stringent of mouth :
 Garibaldi ! we 'll come to him shortly,
 (As soon as he *ends* in the South).

Napoleon—as strong as ten armies,
 Corrupt as seven devils—a fact
 You accede to, then seek where the harm is
 Drained off from the man to his act,

And find—a free nation ! Suppose
Some hell-brood, in Eden's sweet greenery,
Convoked for creating—a rose !
Would it suit the infernal machinery ?

Cavour,—to the despot's desire,
Who his own thought so craftily marries—
What is he but just a thin wire
For conducting the lightning from Paris ?
Yes, write down the two as compeers,
Confessing (you would not permit a lie)
He bore up his Piedmont ten years
Till she suddenly smiled and was Italy.

And the King, with that "stain on his scutcheon,"¹
Savoy—as the calumny runs ;
(If it be not his blood,—with his clutch on
The sword, and his face to the guns.)
O first, where the battle-storm gathers,
O loyal of heart on the throne,
Let those keep the "graves of their fathers,"
Who quail, in a nerve, from their own !

For *thee*—through the dim Hades-portal
The dream of a voice—"Blessed thou
Who hast made all thy race twice immortal !
No need of the sepulchres now !
—Left to Bourbons and Hapsburgs, who fester
Above-ground with worm-eaten souls,
While the ghost of some pale feudal jester
Before them strews treaties in holes."

But hush !—am I dreaming a poem
Of Hades, Heaven, Justice ? Not I ;
I began too far off, in my proem,
With what men believe and deny :

¹ Blue Book. Diplomatical Correspondence.

And on earth, whatsoever the need is,
(To sum up as thoughtful reviewers)
The moral of every great deed is—
The virtue of slandering the doers.

THE FORCED RECRUIT.

SOLFERINO, 1859.

IN the ranks of the Austrian you found him,
He died with his face to you all ;
Yet bury him here where around him
You honour your bravest that fall.

Venetian, fair-featured and slender,
He lies shot to death in his youth,
With a smile on his lips over-tender
For any mere soldier's dead mouth.

No stranger, and yet not a traitor,
Though alien the cloth on his breast,
Underneath it how seldom a greater
Young heart, has a shot sent to rest !

By your enemy tortured and goaded
To march with them, stand in their file,
His musket (see) never was loaded,
He facing your guns with that smile !

As orphans yearn on to their mothers,
He yearned to your patriot bands ;—
“ Let me die for our Italy, brothers,
If not in your ranks, by your hands !

" Aim straightly, fire steadily ! spare me
 A ball in the body which may
 Deliver my heart here, and tear me
 This badge of the Austrian away ! "

So thought he, so died he this morning.
 What then ? many others have died.
 Ay, but easy for men to die scorning
 The death-stroke, who fought side by side—

One tricolor floating above them ;
 Struck down 'mid triumphant acclaims
 Of an Italy rescued to love them
 And blazon the brass with their names.

But he,—without witness or honour,
 Mixed, shamed in his country's regard,
 With the tyrants who march in upon her,
 Died faithful and passive : 't was hard.

'T was sublime. In a cruel restriction
 Cut off from the guerdon of sons,
 With most filial obedience, conviction,
 His soul kissed the lips of her guns.

That moves you ? Nay, grudge not to show it,
 While digging a grave for him here :
 The others who died, says your poet,
 Have glory,—let *him* have a tear.



GARIBALDI.

HE bent his head upon his breast
 Wherein his lion-heart lay sick :—
 " Perhaps we are not ill-repaid ;
 Perhaps this is not a true test ;
 Perhaps this was not a foul trick ;
 Perhaps none wronged, and none betrayed.

“ Perhaps the people’s vote which here
United, there may disunite,
And both be lawful as they think ;
Perhaps a patriot statesman, dear
For chartering nations, can with right
Disfranchise those who hold the ink.

“ Perhaps men’s wisdom is not craft ;
Men’s greatness, not a selfish greed ;
Men’s justice, not the safer side ;
Perhaps even women, when they laughed,
Wept, thanked us that the land was freed,
Not wholly (though they kissed us) lied.

“ Perhaps no more than this we meant,
When up at Austria’s guns we flew,
And quenched them with a cry apiece,
Italia !—Yet a dream was sent . . .
The little house my father knew,
The olives and the palms of Nice.”

He paused, and drew his sword out slow,
Then pored upon the blade intent,
As if to read some written thing ;
While many murmured,—“ He will go
In that despairing sentiment
And break his sword before the King.”

He, poring still upon the blade,
His large lid quivered, something fell.
“ Perhaps,” he said, “ I was not born
With such fine brains to treat and trade,—
And if a woman knew it well,
Her falsehood only meant her scorn.

“ Yet through Varese’s cannon-smoke
My eye saw clear : men feared this man
At Como, where this sword could seal

Death's protocol with every stroke :
 And now . . . the drop there scarcely can
 Impair the keenness of the steel.

" So man and sword may have their use ;
 And if the soil beneath my foot
 In valour's act is forfeited,
 I 'll strike the harder, take my dues
 Out nobler, and all loss confute
 From ampler heavens above my head.

" My King, King Victor, I am thine !
 So much Nice-dust as what I am
 (To make our Italy) must cleave.
 Forgive that." Forward with a sign
 He went.

You 've seen the telegram ?
Palermo's taken, we believe.



CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

ὡς βασιλεῖ, ὡς θεῷ, ὡς νεκρῷ.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

THE Pope on Christmas Day
 Sits in St. Peter's chair ;
 But the peoples murmur and say,
 " Our souls are sick and forlorn,
 And who will show us where
 Is the stable where Christ was born ? "

The star is lost in the dark ;
 The manger is lost in the straw ,
 The Christ cries faintly . . . hark ! . . .
 Through bands that swaddle and strangle—
 But the Pope in the chair of awe
 Looks down the great quadrangle.

The magi kneel at his foot,
Kings of the east and west,
But, instead of the angels, (mute
Is the "Peace on earth" of their song),
The peoples, perplexed and opprest,
Are sighing, "How long, how long?"

And, instead of the kine, bewilder in
Shadow of aisle and dome,
The bear who tore up the children,
The fox who burnt up the corn,
And the wolf who suckled at Rome
Brothers to slay and to scorn.

Cardinals left and right of him,
Worshippers round and beneath,
The silver trumpets at sight of him
Thrill with a musical blast :
But the people say through their teeth,
"Trumpets? we wait for the Last!"

He sits in the place of the Lord,
And asks for the gifts of the time ;
Gold, for the haft of a sword,
To win back Romagna averse,
Incense, to sweeten a crime,
And myrrh, to embitter a curse.

Then a king of the west said, "Good!—
I bring thee the gifts of the time ;
Red, for the patriot's blood,
Green, for the martyr's crown,
White, for the dew and the rime,
When the morning of God comes down."

—O mystic tricolor bright !
The Pope's heart quailed like a man's :
The cardinals froze at the sight,

Bowing their tonsures hoary :
And the eyes in the peacock-fans
Winked at the alien glory.

But the peoples exclaimed in hope,
" Now blessed be he who has brought
These gifts of the time to the Pope,
When our souls were sick and forlorn.
—And *here* is the star we sought,
To show us where Christ was born !

ITALY AND THE WORLD.

FLORENCE, Bologna, Parma, Modena—
When you named them a year ago,
So many graves reserved by God, in a
Day of Judgment, you seemed to know,
To open and let out the resurrection.

And meantime, (you made your reflection
If you were English), was nought to be done
But sorting sables, in predilection
For all those martyrs dead and gone,
Till the new earth and heaven made ready.

And if your politics were not heady,
Violent,—“ Good,” you added, “ good
In all things ! mourn on sure and steady.
Churchyard thistles are wholesome food
For our European wandering asses.

‘ The date of the resurrection passes
Human fore-knowledge : men unborn
Will gain by it (even in the lower classes),
But none of these. It is not the morn
Because the cock of France is crowing.

"Cocks crow at midnight, seldom knowing
Starlight from dawn-light ! 't is a mad
Poor creature." Here you paused, and growing
Scornful,—suddenly, let us add,
The trumpet sounded, the graves were open.

Life and life and life ! agroped in
The dusk of death, warm hands, stretched out
For swords, proved more life still to hope in,
Beyond and behind. Arise with a shout,
Nation of Italy, slain and buried !

Hill to hill and turret to turret
Flashing the tricolor,—newly created
Beautiful Italy, calm, unhurried,
Rise heroic and renovated,
Rise to the final restitution.

Rise ; prefigure the grand solution
Of earth's municipal, insular schisms,—
Statesmen draping self-love's conclusion
In cheap, vernacular patriotisms,
Unable to give up Judæa for Jesus.

Bring us the higher example ; release us
Into the larger coming time :
And into Christ's broad garment piece us
Rags of virtue as poor as crime,
National selfishness, civic vaunting.

No more Jew nor Greek then,—taunting
Nor taunted ;—no more England nor France !
But one confederate brotherhood planting
One flag only, to mark the advance,
Onward and upward, of all humanity

For fully developed Christianity
Is civilization perfected.

"Count the ships," in national vanity,
"Measure the frontier," shall it be said?
—Count the nation's heart-beats sooner.

For, though behind by a cannon or schooner,
That nation still is predominant
Whose pulse beats quickest in zeal to oppugn or
Succour another, in wrong or want,
Passing the frontier in love and abhorrence.

Modena, Parma, Bologna, Florence,
Open us out the wider way!
Dwarf, in that chapel of old St. Laurence,
Your Michel Angelo's giant Day,
With the grandeur of this Day breaking o'er us!

Ye who, restrained as an ancient chorus,
Mute while the choryphæus spake,
Hush your separate voices before us,
Sink your separate lives for the sake
Of one sole Italy's living for ever!

Givers of coat and cloak too,—never
Grudging that purple of yours at the best,—
By your heroic will and endeavour,
Each sublimely dispossessed,
That all may inherit what each surrenders!

Earth shall bless you, O noble emenders
On egotist nations! Ye shall lead
The plough of the world, and sow new splendours
Into the furrow of things for seed,—
Ever the richer for what ye have given.

Lead us and teach us, till earth and heaven
Grow larger around us and higher above.
Our sacrament-bread has a bitter leaven;
We bait our traps with the name of love,
Till hate itself has a kinder meaning.

Oh, this world : this cheating and screening
Of cheats ! this conscience for candle-wicks,
Not beacon-fires ; this over-weening
Of under-hand diplomatical tricks,
Dared for the country while scorned for the counter !

Oh, this envy of those who mount here,
And oh, this malice to make them trip !
Rather quenching the fire there, drying the fount here,
To frozen body and thirsty lip,
Than leave to a neighbour their ministration.

I cry aloud in my poet-passion,
Viewing my England o'er Alp and sea.
I loved her more in her ancient fashion :
She carries her rifles too thick for me,
Who spares them so in the cause of a brother.

Suspicion, panic ? end this pother.
The sword, kept sheathless at peace-time, rusts.
None fears for himself while he feels for another :
The brave man either fights or trusts,
And wears no mail in his private chamber.

Beautiful Italy ! golden amber
Warm with the kisses of lover and traitor !
Thou who hast drawn us on to remember,
Draw us to hope now : let us be greater
By this new future than that old story,

Till truer glory replaces all glory,
As the torch grows blind at the dawn of day ;
And the nations, rising up, their sorry
And foolish sins shall put away,
As children their toys when the teacher enters :

Till Love's one centre devour these centres
Of many self-loves ; and the patriot's trick

To better his land by egotist ventures,
Defamed from a virtue, shall make men sick,
As the scalp at the belt of some red hero.

For certain virtues have dropped to zero,
Left by the sun on the mountain's dewy side ;
Churchman's charities, tender as Nero,
Indian suttee, heathen suicide,
Service to rights divine, proved hollow :

And Heptarchy patriotisms must follow.

—National voices, distinct yet dependent,
Ensphering each other, as swallow does swallow,
With circles still widening and ever ascendant,
In multifarious life to united progression,—

These shall remain. And when, in the session
Of nations, the separate language is heard,
Each shall aspire, in sublime indiscretion,
To help with a thought or exalt with a word
Less her own than her rival's honour.

Each Christian nation shall take upon her
The law of the Christian man in vast :
The crown of the getter shall fall to the donor,
And last shall be first while first shall be last,
And to love best shall still be, to reign unsurpassed.

THE DANCE.

You remember down at Florence our Cascine,
Where the people on the feast-days walk and drive,
And, through the trees, long-drawn in many a green way,
O'er-roofing hum and murmur like a hive,
The river and the mountains look alive ?

You remember the piazzone there, the stand-place
Of carriages a-brim with Florence beauties,

Who lean and melt to music as the band plays,
Or smile and chat with some one who a-foot is,
Or on horseback, in observance of male duties ?

'T is so pretty, in the afternoons of summer,
So many gracious faces brought together !
Call it rout, or call it concert, they have come here,
In the floating of the fan and of the feather,
To reciprocate with beauty the fine weather.

While the flower-girls offer nosegays (because *they* too
Go with other sweets) at every carriage-door ;
Here, by shake of a white finger, signed away to
Some next buyer, who sits buying score on score,
Piling roses upon roses evermore.

And last season, when the French camp had its station
In the meadow-ground, things quickened and grew
gayer

Through the mingling of the liberating nation
With this people ; groups of Frenchmen everywhere,
Strolling, gazing, judging lightly—" who was fair."

Then the noblest lady present took upon her
To speak nobly from her carriage for the rest :
" Pray these officers from France to do us honour
By dancing with us straightway." The request
Was gravely apprehended as addressed.

And the men of France bareheaded, bowing lowly,
Led out each a proud signora to the space
Which the startled crowd had rounded for them—slowly,
Just a touch of still emotion in his face,
Not presuming through the symbol, on the grace.

There was silence in the people : some lips trembled,
But none jested. Broke the music, at a glance :
And the daughters of our princes, thus assembled,
Stepped the measure with the gallant sons of France :
Hush ! it might have been a Mass, and not a dance.

And they danced there till the blue that overskied us,
 Swooned with passion, though the footing seemed
 sedate ;

And the mountains, heaving mighty hearts beside us,
 Sighed a rapture in a shadow, to dilate,
 And touch the holy stone where Dante sate.

Then the sons of France bareheaded, lowly bowing,
 Led the ladies back where kinsmen of the south
 Stood, received them ; till, with burst of overflowing
 Feeling—husbands, brothers, Florence's male youth,
 Turned, and kissed the martial strangers mouth to
 mouth.

And a cry went up, a cry from all that people !
 —You have heard a people cheering, you suppose,
 For the Member, mayor—with chorus from the steeple ?
 This was different : scarce as loud perhaps, (who
 knows ?)

For we saw wet eyes around us ere the close.

And we felt as if a nation, too long borne in
 By hard wrongers,—comprehending in such attitude
 That God had spoken somewhere since the morning,
 That men were somehow brothers, by no platitude,—
 Cried exultant in great wonder and free gratitude.

CASA GUIDI WINDOWS.

PART I.

I HEARD last night a little child go singing
 'Neath Casa Guidi windows, by the church,
O bella libertà, O bella !—stringing
 The same words still on notes he went in search
 So high for, you concluded the upspringing
 Of such a nimble bird to sky from perch

Must leave the whole bush in a tremble green,
And that the heart of Italy must beat,
While such a voice had leave to rise serene
'Twixt church and palace of a Florence street :
A little child, too, who not long had been
By mother's finger steadied on his feet,
And still *O bella libertà* he sang.

Then I thought, musing, of the innumerable
Sweet songs which still for Italy outrang
From older singers' lips who sang not thus
Exultingly and purely, yet, with pang
Fast sheathed in music, touched the heart of us
So finely that the pity scarcely pained.
I thought how Filicaja led on others,
Bewailers for their Italy enchained,
And how they called her childless among mothers,
Widow of empires, ay, and scarce refrained
Cursing her beauty to her face, as brothers
Might a shamed sister's,—“ Had she been less fair
She were less wretched ;”—how, evoking so
From congregated wrong and heaped despair
Of men and women writhing under blow,
Harrowed and hideous in a filthy lair,
Some personating Image wherein woe
Was wrapt in beauty from offending much,
They called it Cybele, or Niobe,
Or laid it corpse-like on a bier for such,
Where all the world might drop for Italy
Those cadenced tears which burn not where they
touch,—
“ Juliet of nations, canst thou die as we ?
And was the violet that crowned thy head
So over-large, though new buds made it rough,
It slipped down and across thine eyelids dead,
O sweet, fair Juliet ? ” Of such songs enough,
Too many of such complaints ! behold, instead,

Void at Verona, Juliet's marble trough : ¹
 As void as that is, are all images
 Men set between themselves and actual wrong,
 To catch the weight of pity, meet the stress
 Of conscience,—since 't is easier to gaze long
 On mournful masks and sad effigies
 Than on real, live, weak creatures crushed by strong.

For me who stand in Italy to-day
 Where worthier poets stood and sang before,
 I kiss their footsteps yet their words gainsay.
 I can but muse in hope upon this shore
 Of golden Arno as it shoots away
 Through Florence' heart, beneath her bridges four :
 Bent bridges, seeming to strain off like bows,
 And tremble while the arrowy undertide
 Shoots on and cleaves the marble as it goes,
 And strikes up palace-walls on either side,
 And froths the cornice out in glittering rows,
 With doors and windows quaintly multiplied,
 And terrace-sweeps, and gazers upon all,
 By whom if flower or kerchief were thrown out
 From any lattice there, the same would fall
 Into the river underneath, no doubt,
 It runs so close and fast 'twixt wall and wall.
 How beautiful ! the mountains from without
 In silence listen for the word said next.
 What word will men say,—here where Giotto planted
 His campanile like an unperplexed
 Fine question Heaven-ward, touching the things granted
 A noble people who, being greatly vexed
 In act, in aspiration keep undaunted ?
 What word will God say ? Michel's Night and Day
 And Dawn and Twilight wait in marble scorn ²

¹ They show at Verona, as the tomb of Juliet, an empty trough of stone.

² These famous statues recline in the Sagrestia Nuova, on the tombs of Giuliano de' Medici, third son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and Lorenzo of

Like dogs upon a dunghill, couched on clay
 From whence the Medicean stamp's outworn,
 The final putting off of all such sway
 By all such hands, and freeing of the unborn
 In Florence and the great world outside Florence.
 Three hundred years his patient statues wait
 In that small chapel of the dim Saint Laurence :
 Day's eyes are breaking bold and passionate
 Over his shoulder, and will flash abhorrence
 On darkness and with level looks meet fate,
 When once loose from that marble film of theirs ;
 The Night has wild dreams in her sleep, the Dawn
 Is haggard as the sleepless, Twilight wears
 A sort of horror ; as the veil withdrawn .
 'Twixt the artist's soul and works had left them heirs
 Of speechless thoughts which would not quail nor fawn,
 Of angers and contempts, of hope and love :
 For not without a meaning did he place
 The princely Urbino on the seat above
 With everlasting shadow on his face,
 While the slow dawns and twilights disapprove
 The ashes of his long-extinguished race
 Which never more shall clog the feet of men.

I do believe, divinest Angelo,
 That winter-hour in Via Larga, when
 They bade thee build a statue up in snow
 And straight that marvel of thine art again
 Dissolved beneath the sun's Italian glow,
 Thine eyes, dilated with the plastic passion,
 Thawing too in drops of wounded manhood, since,
 To mock alike thine art and indignation,
 Laughed at the palace-window the new prince,—
 ("Aha ! this genius needs for exaltation,

Urbino, his grandson. Strozzi's epigram on the Night, with Michel Angelo's rejoinder, is well known.

¹ This mocking task was set by Pietro, the unworthy successor of Lorenzo the Magnificent.

When all 's said and howe'er the proud may wince,
A little marble from our princely mines !")
I do believe that hour thou laughedst too
For the whole sad world and for thy Florentines,
After those few tears, which were only few !
That as beneath the sun, the grand white lines
Of thy snow statue trembled and withdrew,—
The head, erect as Jove's, being palsied first,
The eyelids flattened, the full brow turned blank,
The right-hand, raised but now as if it cursed,
Dropt, a mere snowball, (till the people sank
Their voices, though a louder laughter burst
From the royal window)—thou couldst proudly thank
God and the prince for promise and presage,
And laugh the laugh back, I think verily,
Thine eyes being purged by tears of righteous rage
To read a wrong into a prophecy,
And measure a true great man's heritage
Against a mere great-duke's posterity.
I think thy soul said then, " I do not need
A principedom and its quarries, after all ;
For if I write, paint, carve a word, indeed,
On book or board or dust, on floor or wall,
The same is kept of God who taketh heed
That not a letter of the meaning fall
Or ere it touch and teach His world's deep heart,
Outlasting, therefore, all your lordships, sir !
So keep your stone, beseech you, for your part,
To cover up your grave-place and refer
The proper titles ! I live by my art.
The thought I threw into this snow shall stir
This gazing people when their gaze is done ;
And the tradition of your act and mine,
When all the snow is melted in the sun,
Shall gather up, for unborn men, a sign
Of what is the true principedom,—ay, and none
Shall laugh that day, except the drunk with wine.

Amen, great Angelo ! the day 's at hand.
If many laugh not on it, shall we weep ?

Much more we must not, let us understand.
Through rhymers sonneteering in their sleep
And archaists mumbling dry bones up the land
And sketchers lauding ruined towns a-heap,—

Through all that drowsy hum of voices smooth,
The hopeful bird mounts carolling from brake,
The hopeful child, with leaps to catch his growth,
Sings open-eyed for liberty's sweet sake :

And I, a singer also from my youth,
Prefer to sing with those who are awake,
With birds, with babes, with men who will not fear
The baptism of the holy morning dew,

(And many of such wakers now are here,
Complete in their anointed manhood, who
Will greatly dare and greatlier persevere,)

Than join those old thin voices with my new,
And sigh for Italy with some safe sigh
Cooped up in music 'twixt an oh and ah,—

Nay, hand in hand with that young child, will I
Go singing rather, "*Bella Libertà*,"

Than, with those poets, croon the dead or cry
"*Se tu men bella fossi, Italia !*"

"Less wretched if less fair." Perhaps a truth
Is so far plain in this, that Italy,

Long trammelled with the purple of her youth
Against her age's ripe activity,

Sits still upon her tombs, without death's ruth
But also without life's brave energy.

"Now tell us what is Italy ?" men ask :

And others answer "Virgil, Cicero,
Catullus, Cæsar." What beside ? to task
The memory closer—"Why, Boccaccio,
Dante, Petrarca,"—and if still the flask

Appears to yield its wine by drops too slow,—
“Angelo, Raffael, Pergolese,”—all
Whose strong hearts beat through stone, or charged again
The paints with fire of souls electrical,
Or broke up heaven for music. What more then?
Why, then, no more. The chaplet’s last beads fall
In naming the last saintship within ken,
And, after that, none prayeth in the land.
Alas, this Italy has too long swept
Heroic ashes up for hour-glass sand;
Of her own past, impassioned nympholept!
Consenting to be nailed here by the hand
To the very bay-tree under which she stept
A queen of old, and plucked a leafy branch;
And, licensing the world too long indeed
To use her broad phylacteries to staunch
And stop her bloody lips, she takes no heed
How one clear word would draw an avalanche
Of living sons around her, to succeed
The vanished generations. Can she count
These oil-eaters with large live mobile mouths
Agape for macaroni, in the amount
Of consecrated heroes of her south’s
Bright rosary? The pitcher at the fount,
The gift of gods, being broken, she much loathes
To let the ground-leaves of the place confer
A natural bowl. So henceforth she would seem
No nation, but the poet’s pensioner,
With arms from every land of song and dream:
While aye her pipers sadly piped of her
Until their proper breaths, in that extreme
Of sighing, split the reed on which they played:
Of which, no more. But never say “no more”
To Italy’s life! Her memories undismayed
Still argue “evermore;” her graves implore

Her future to be strong and not afraid ;
Her very statues send their looks before.

We do not serve the dead—the past is past.
God lives, and lifts His glorious mornings up
Before the eyes of men awake at last,
Who put away the meats they used to sup,
And down upon the dust of earth outcast
The dregs remaining of the ancient cup,
Then turn to wakeful prayer and worthy act.
The Dead, upon their awful 'vantage ground,
The sun not in their faces, shall abstract
No more our strength ; we will not be discrowned
As guardians of their crowns, nor deign transact
A barter of the present, for a sound
Of good so counted in the foregone days.
O Dead, ye shall no longer cling to us
With rigid hands of dessicating praise,
And drag us backward by the garment thus,
To stand and laud you in long-drawn virelays !
We will not henceforth be oblivious
Of our own lives, because ye lived before,
Nor of our acts, because ye acted well.
We thank you that ye first unlatched the door,
But will not make it inaccessible
By thankings on the threshold any more.
We hurry onward to extinguish hell
With our fresh souls, our younger hope, and God's
Maturity of purpose. Soon shall we
Die also ! and, that then our periods
Of life may round themselves to memory
As smoothly as on our graves the burial-sods,
We now must look to it to excel as ye,
And bear our age as far, unlimited
By the last mind-mark ; so, to be invoked
By future generations, as their Dead.

'T is true that when the dust of death has choked
 A great man's voice, the common words he said
 Turn oracles, the common thoughts he yoked
 Like horses, draw like griffins : this is true
 And acceptable. I, too, should desire,
 When men make record, with the flowers they strew,
 " Savonarola's soul went out in fire
 Upon our Grand-duke's piazza,¹ and burned through
 A moment first, or ere he did expire,
 The veil betwixt the right and wrong, and showed
 How near God sate and judged the judges there,—"
 Upon the self-same pavement overstrewed
 To cast my violets with as reverent care,
 And prove that all the winters which have snowed
 Cannot snow out the scent, from stones and air,
 Of a sincere man's virtues. This was he,
 Savonarola, who, while Peter sank
 With his whole boat-load, called courageously
 " Wake Christ, wake Christ !"—who, having tried the
 tank
 Of old church-waters used for baptism
 Ere Luther came to spill them, swore they stank ;
 Who also by a princely deathbed cried,
 " Loose Florence, or God will not loose thy soul !"
 Then fell back the Magnificent and died
 Beneath the star-look shooting from the cowl,
 Which turned to wormwood-bitterness the wide
 Deep sea of his ambitions. It were foul
 To grudge Savonarola and the rest
 Their violets : rather pay them quick and fresh !
 The emphasis of death makes manifest
 The eloquence of action in our flesh ;
 And men who, living, were but dimly guessed,

¹ Savonarola was burnt for his testimony against papal corruptions as early as March, 1498 ; and, as late as our own day, it has been the custom in Florence to strew with violets the pavement where he suffered, in grateful recognition of the anniversary.

When once free from their life's entangled mesh,
Show their full length in graves, or oft indeed
Exaggerate their stature, in the flat,
To noble admirations which exceed
Most nobly, yet will calculate in that
But accurately. We, who are the seed
Of buried creatures, if we turned and spat
Upon our antecedents, we were vile.
Bring violets rather. If these had not walked
Their furlong, could we hope to walk our mile?
Therefore bring violets. Yet if we self-baulked
Stand still, a-strewing violets all the while,
These moved in vain, of whom we have vainly talked.
So rise up henceforth with a cheerful smile,
And having strewn the violets, reap the corn,
And having reaped and garnered, bring the plough
And draw new furrows 'neath the healthy morn,
And plant the great Hereafter in this Now.

Of old 't was so. How step by step was worn,
As each man gained on each securely!—how
Each by his own strength sought his own Ideal,—
The ultimate Perfection leaning bright
From out the sun and stars to bless the leal
And earnest search of all for Fair and Right
Through doubtful forms by earth accounted real!
Because old Jubal blew into delight
The souls of men with clear-piped melodies,
If youthful Asaph were content at most
To draw from Jubal's grave, with listening eyes,
Traditionary music's floating ghost
Into the grass-grown silence, were it wise?
And was 't not wiser, Jubal's breath being lost,
That Miriam clashed her cymbals to surprise
The sun between her white arms flung apart,
With new glad golden sounds? that David's strings

O'erflowed his hand with music from his heart ?
So harmony grows full from many springs,
And happy accident turns holy art.

You enter, in your Florence wanderings,
The church of Saint Maria Novella. Pass
The left stair, where at plague-time Machiavel¹
Saw One with set fair face as in a glass,
Dressed out against the fear of death and hell,
Rustling her silks in pauses of the Mass,
To keep the thought off how her husband fell,
When she left home, stark dead across her feet,—
The stair leads up to what the Orgagnas save
Of Dante's dæmons ; you, in passing it,
Ascend the right stair from the farther nave
To muse in a small chapel scarcely lit
By Cimabue's Virgin. Bright and brave,
That picture was accounted, mark, of old :
A king stood bare before its sovran grace,²
A reverent people shouted to behold
The picture, not the king, and even the place
Containing such a miracle grew bold,
Named the Glad Borgo from that beauteous face
Which thrilled the artist, after work, to think
His own ideal Mary-smile should stand
So very near him,—he, within the brink
Of all that glory, let in by his hand
With too divine a rashness ! Yet none shrink
Who come to gaze here now : albeit 't was planned
Sublimely in the thought's simplicity :
The Lady, throned in empyreal state,

¹ See his description of the plague in Florence.

² Charles of Anjou, in his passage through Florence, was permitted to see this picture while yet in Cimabue's "bottega." The populace followed the royal visitor, and, from the universal delight and admiration, the quarter of the city in which the artist lived was called "Borgo Allegri." The picture was carried in triumph to the church, and deposited there.

Minds only the young Babe upon her knee,
While sidelong angels bear the royal weight,
Prostrated meekly, smiling tenderly,
Oblivion of their wings ; the Child thereat
Stretching its hand like God. If any should,
Because of some stiff draperies and loose joints,
Gaze scorn down from the heights of Raffaello
On Cimabue's picture,—Heaven anoints
The head of no such critic, and his blood
The poet's curse strikes full on and appoints
To ague and cold spasms for evermore.
A noble picture ! worthy of the shout
Wherewith along the streets the people bore
Its cherub-faces which the sun threw out
Until they stooped and entered the church door.
Yet rightly was young Giotto talked about,
Whom Cimabue found among the sheep,¹
And knew, as gods know gods, and carried home
To paint the things he had painted, with a deep
And fuller insight, and so overcome
His chapel-Lady with a heavenlier sweep
Of light : for thus we mount into the sum
Of great things known or acted. I hold, too,
That Cimabue smiled upon the lad
At the first stroke which passed what he could do,
Or else his Virgin's smile had never had
Such sweetness in 't. All great men who foreknew
Their heirs in art, for art's sake have been glad,
And bent their old white heads as if uncrowned,
Fanatics of their pure Ideals still
Far more than of their triumphs, which were found
With some less vehement struggle of the will.

¹ How Cimabue found Giotto, the shepherd-boy, sketching a ram of his flock upon a stone, is prettily told by Vasari,—who also relates that the elder artist Margheritone died "infastidito" of the successes of the new school.

If old Margheritone trembled, swooned
And died despairing at the open sill

Of other men's achievements, (who achieved,
By loving art beyond the master) he

Was old Margheritone, and conceived
Never, at first youth and most ecstasy,

A Virgin like that dream of one, which heaved
The death-sigh from his heart. If wistfully

Margheritone sickened at the smell
Of Cimabue's laurel, let him go !

For Cimabue stood up very well
In spite of Giotto's, and Angelico

The artist-saint kept smiling in his cell
The smile with which he welcomed the sweet slow
Inbreak of angels, (whitening through the dim
That he might paint them) while the sudden sense
Of Raffael's future was revealed to him
By force of his own fair works' competence.

The same blue waters where the dolphins swim
Suggest the tritons. Through the blue Immense
Strike out, all swimmers ! cling not in the way
Of one another, so to sink ; but learn

The strong man's impulse, catch the freshening spray
He throws up in his motions, and discern

By his clear westering eye, the time of day.

Thou, God, hast set us worthy gifts to earn
Besides Thy heaven and Thee ! and when I say

There 's room here for the weakest man alive

To live and die, there 's room too, I repeat,

For all the strongest to live well, and strive

Their own way, by their individual heat,—

Like some new bee-swarm leaving the old hive,

Despite the wax which tempts so violet-sweet.

Then let the living live, the dead retain

Their grave-cold flowers !—though honour 's best supplied

By bringing actions, to prove theirs not vain.

Cold graves, we say? it shall be testified
That living men who burn in heart and brain,
Without the dead were colder. If we tried
To sink the past beneath our feet, be sure
The future would not stand. Precipitate
This old roof from the shrine, and, insecure,
The nesting swallows fly off, mate from mate.
How scant the gardens, if the graves were fewer!
The tall green poplars grew no longer straight
Whose tops not looked to Troy. Would any fight
For Athens, and not swear by Marathon?
Who dared build temples, without tombs in sight?
Or live, without some dead man's benison?
Or seek truth, hope for good, and strive for right,
If, looking up, he saw not in the sun
Some angel of the martyrs all day long
Standing and waiting? Your last rhythm will need
Your earliest key-note. Could I sing this song,
If my dead masters had not taken heed
To help the heavens and earth to make me strong,
As the wind ever will find out some reed
And touch it to such issues as belong
To such a frail thing? None may grudge the Dead,
Libations from full cups. Unless we choose
To look back to the hills behind us spread,
The plains before us sadden and confuse;
If orphaned, we are disinherited.

I would but turn these lachrymals to use,
And pour fresh oil in from the olive-grove,
To furnish them as new lamps. Shall I say
What made my heart beat with exulting love
A few weeks back?—

The day was such a day
As Florence owes the sun. The sky above,
Its weight upon the mountains seemed to lay,

And palpitate in glory, like a dove
Who has flown too fast, full-hearted—take away
The image ! for the heart of man beat higher
That day in Florence, flooding all her streets
And piazzas with a tumult and desire.
The people, with accumulated heats
And faces turned one way, as if one fire
Both drew and flushed them, left their ancient beats
And went up toward the palace-Pitti wall
To thank their Grand-duke who, not quite of course,
Had graciously permitted, at their call,
The citizens to use their civic force
To guard their civic homes. So, one and all,
The Tuscan cities streamed up to the source
Of this new good at Florence, taking it
As good so far, presageful of more good,—
The first torch of Italian freedom, lit
To toss in the next tiger's face who should
Approach too near them in a greedy fit,—
The first pulse of an even flow of blood
To prove the level of Italian veins
Towards rights perceived and granted. How we gazed
From Casa Guidi windows while, in trains
Of orderly procession—banners raised,
And intermittent bursts of martial strains
Which died upon the shout, as if amazed
By gladness beyond music—they passed on !
The Magistracy, with insignia, passed,—
And all the people shouted in the sun,
And all the thousand windows which had cast
A ripple of silks in blue and scarlet down,
(As if the houses overflowed at last,)
Seemed growing larger with fair heads and eyes.
The Lawyers passed,—and still arose the shout,
And hands broke from the windows to surprise
Those grave calm brows with bay-tree leaves thrown out.

The Priesthood passed,—the friars with worldly-wise
Keen sidelong glances from their beards about
The street to see who shouted ; many a monk
Who takes a long rope in the waist, was there :
Whereat the popular exultation drunk
With indrawn “vivas” the whole sunny air,
While through the murmuring windows rose and sunk.
A cloud of kerchiefed hands,—“ The church makes fair
Her welcome in the new Pope’s name.” Ensued
The black sign of the “ Martyrs ”—(name no name,
But count the graves in silence.) Next were viewed
The Artists ; next, the Trades ; and after came
The People,—flag and sign, and rights as good—
And very loud the shout was for that same
Motto, “ Il popolo.” IL POPOLO,—
The word means dukedom, empire, majesty,
And kings in such an hour might read it so.
And next, with banners, each in his degree,
Deputed representatives a-row
Of every separate state of Tuscany :
Siena’s she-wolf, bristling on the fold
Of the first flag, preceded Pisa’s hare,
And Massa’s lion floated calm in gold,
Pienza’s following with his silver stare,
Arezzo’s steed pranced clear from bridle-hold,—
And well might shout our Florence, greeting there
These, and more brethren. Last, the world had sent
The various children of her teeming flanks—
Greeks, English, French—as if to a parliament
Of lovers of her Italy in ranks,
Each bearing its land’s symbol reverent ;
At which the stones seemed breaking into thanks
And rattling up the sky, such sounds in proof
Arose ; the very house-walls seemed to bend ;
The very windows, up from door to roof,
Flashed out a rapture of bright heads, to mend

With passionate looks the gesture's whirling off
A hurricane of leaves. Three hours did end
While all these passed ; and ever in the crowd,
Rude men, unconscious of the tears that kept
Their beards moist, shouted ; some few laughed aloud,
And none asked any why they laughed and wept :
Friends kissed each other's cheeks, and foes long
vowed
More warmly did it ; two-months babies leapt
Right upward in their mothers' arms, whose black
Wide glittering eyes looked elsewhere ; lovers pressed
Each before either, neither glancing back ;
And peasant maidens smoothly 'tired and tressed
Forgot to finger on their throats the slack
Great pearl-strings ; while old blind men would not rest,
But pattered with their staves and slid their shoes
Along the stones, and smiled as if they saw.
O heaven, I think that day had noble use
Among God's days ! So near stood Right and Law,
Both mutually forborne ! Law would not bruise,
Nor Right deny, and each in reverent awe
Honoured the other. And if, ne'ertheless,
That good day's sun delivered to the vines
No charta, and the liberal Duke's excess
Did scarce exceed a Guelf's or Ghibelline's
In any special actual righteousness
Of what that day he granted, still the signs
Are good and full of promise, we must say,
When multitudes approach their kings with prayers
And kings concede their people's right to pray
Both in one sunshine. Griefs are not despairs,
So uttered, nor can royal claims dismay
When men from humble homes and ducal chairs,
Hate wrong together. It was well to view
Those banners ruffled in a ruler's face
Inscribed, " Live freedom, union, and all true

Brave patriots who are aided by God's grace !"

Nor was it ill when Leopoldo drew
His little children to the window-place

He stood in at the Pitti, to suggest
They too should govern as the people willed.

What a cry rose then ! some, who saw the best,
Declared his eyes filled up and overfilled

With good warm human tears which unrepressed
Ran down. I like his face ; the forehead's build

Has no capacious genius, yet perhaps
Sufficient comprehension,—mild and sad,

And careful nobly,—not with care that wraps
Self-loving hearts, to stifle and make mad,

But careful with the care that shuns a lapse
Of faith and duty, studious not to add

A burden in the gathering of a gain.

And so, God save the Duke, I say with those

Who that day shouted it ; and while dukes reign,
May all wear in the visible overflows

Of spirit, such a look of careful pain !

For God must love it better than repose.

And all the people who went up to let

Their hearts out to that Duke, as has been told—

Where guess ye that the living people met,

Kept tryst, formed ranks, chose leaders, first unrolled
Their banners ?

In the Loggia ? where is set

Cellini's godlike Perseus, bronze or gold,
(How name the metal, when the statue flings

Its soul so in your eyes ?) with brow and sword
Superbly calm, as all opposing things,

Slain with the Gorgon, were no more abhorred
Since ended ?

No, the people sought no wings

From Perseus in the Loggia, nor implored

An inspiration in the place beside
From that dim bust of Brutus, jagged and grand,
Where Buonarroti passionately tried
From out the close-clenched marble to demand
The head of Rome's sublimest homicide,
Then dropt the quivering mallet from his hand,
Despairing he could find no model-stuff
Of Brutus in all Florence where he found
The gods and gladiators thick enough.
Nor there ! the people chose still holier ground :
The people, who are simple, blind and rough,
Know their own angels, after looking round.
Whom chose they then ? where met they ?

On the stone

Called Dante's,—a plain flat stone scarce discerned
From others in the pavement,—whereupon
He used to bring his quiet chair out, turned
To Brunelleschi's church, and pour alone
The lava of his spirit when it burned :
It is not cold to-day. O passionate
Poor Dante who, a banished Florentine,
Didst sit austere at banquets of the great
And muse upon this far-off stone of thine
And think how oft some passer used to wait
A moment, in the golden day's decline,
With " Good-night, dearest Dante !"—well, good-night !
I muse now, Dante, and think verily,
Though chapelled in the byeway out of sight,
Ravenna's bones would thrill with ecstasy,
Couldst know thy favourite stone's elected right
As tryst-place for thy Tuscans to foresee
Their earliest chartas from. Good-night, good morn,
Henceforward, Dante ! now my soul is sure
That thine is better comforted of scorn,
And looks down earthward in completer cure

Than when, in Santa Croce church, forlorn
 Of any corpse, the architect and hewer
 Did pile the empty marbles as thy tomb.¹
 For now thou art no longer exiled, now
 Best honoured : we salute thee who art come
 Back to the old stone with a softer brow
 Than Giotto drew upon the wall, for some
 Good lovers of our age to track and plough*
 Their way to, through time's ordures stratified,
 And startle broad awake into the dull
 Bargello chamber : now thou 'rt milder-eyed,—
 Now Beatrix may leap up glad to cull
 Thy first smile, even in heaven and at her side,
 Like that which, nine years old, looked beautiful
 At May-game. What do I say? I only meant
 That tender Dante loved his Florence well,
 While Florence, now, to love him is content ;
 And, mark ye, that the piercingest sweet smell,
 Of love's dear incense by the living sent
 To find the dead, is not accessible
 To lazy livers—no narcotic,—not
 Swung in a censer to a sleepy tune,—
 But trod out in the morning air by hot
 Quick spirits who tread firm to ends foreshown,
 And use the name of greatness unforgot,
 To meditate what greatness may be done.

For Dante sits in heaven and ye stand here,
 And more remains for doing, all must feel,
 Than trysting on his stone from year to year
 To shift processions, civic toe to heel,
 The town's thanks to the Pitti. Are ye freer
 For what was felt that day? a chariot-wheel

¹ The Florentines, to whom the Ravennese refused the body of Dante (demanded of them "in a late remorse of love"), have given a cenotaph in this church to their divine poet. Something less than a grave.

* In allusion to Mr. Kirkup's discovery of Giotto's fresco portrait of Dante.

May spin fast, yet the chariot never roll.

But if that day suggested something good,
And bettered, with one purpose, soul by soul,—

Better means freer. A land's brotherhood
Is most puissant : men, upon the whole,
Are what they can be,—nations, what they would.

Will therefore, to be strong, thou Italy !

Will to be noble ! Austrian Metternich
Can fix no yoke unless the neck agree ;

And thine is like the lion's when the thick
Dews shudder from it, and no man would be
The stroker of his mane, much less would prick
His nostril with a reed. When nations roar

Like lions, who shall tame them and defraud
Of the due pasture by the river-shore ?

Roar, therefore ! shake your dew-laps dry abroad :
The amphitheatre with open door

Leads back upon the benches who applaud
The last spear-thruster.

Yet the Heavens forbid

That we should call on passion to confront
The brutal with the brutal and, amid

This ripening world, suggest a lion-hunt
And lion's-vengeance for the wrongs men did
And do now, though the spears are getting blunt.

We only call, because the sight and proof
Of lion-strength hurts nothing ; and to show
A lion-heart, and measure paw with hoof,

Helps something, even, and will instruct a foe
As well as the onslaught, how to stand aloof :
Or else the world gets past the mere brute blow

Or given or taken. Children use the fist
Until they are of age to use the brain ;

And so we needed Cæsars to assist

Man's justice, and Napoleons to explain
God's counsel, when a point was nearly missed,

Until our generations should attain
Christ's stature nearer. Not that we, alas,
Attain already ; but a single inch
Will raise to look down on the swordsman's pass,
As knightly Roland on the coward's flinch :
And, after chloroform and ether-gas,
We find out slowly what the bee and finch
Have ready found, through Nature's lamp in each,—
How to our races we may justify
Our individual claims, and, as we reach
Our own grapes, bend the top vines to supply
The children's uses,—how to fill a breach
With olive-branches,—how to quench a lie
With truth, and smite a foe upon the cheek
With Christ's most conquering kiss. Why these are
things
Worth a great nation's finding, to prove weak
The "glorious arms" of military kings.
And so with wide embrace, my England, seek
To stifle the bad heat and flickerings
Of this world's false and nearly expended fire !
Draw palpitating arrows to the wood,
And twang abroad thy high hopes and thy higher
Resolves, from that most virtuous altitude !
Till nations shall unconsciously aspire
By looking up to thee, and learn that good
And glory are not different. Announce law
By freedom ; exalt chivalry by peace ;
Instruct how clear calm eyes can overawe ;
And how pure hands, stretched simply to release
A bond slave, will not need a sword to draw
To be held dreadful. O my England, cease
Thy purple with no alien agonies,
No struggles towards encroachment, no vile war !
Disband thy captains, change thy victories,
Be henceforth prosperous as the angels are,
Helping, not humbling.

Drums and battle-cries

Go out in music of the morning-star—
And soon we shall have thinkers in the place
Of fighters, each found able as a man
To strike electric influence through a race,
Unstayed by city-wall and barbican.
The poet shall look grander in the face
Than even of old, (when he of Greece began
To sing "that Achillean wrath which slew
So many heroes,")—seeing he shall treat
The deeds of souls heroic toward the true,
The oracles of life, previsions sweet
And awful like divine swans gliding through
White arms of Ledas, which will leave the heat
Of their escaping godship to endure
The human medium with a heavenly flush

Meanwhile, in this same Italy we want
Not popular passion, to arise and crush,
But popular conscience, which may covenant
For what it knows. Concede without a blush
To grant the "civic guard" is not to grant
The civic spirit, living and awake :
Those lappets on your shoulders, citizens,
Your eyes strain after sideways till they ache,
(While still, in admirations and amens,
The crowd comes up on festa-days to take
The great sight in)—are not intelligence,
Not courage even—alas, if not, the sign
Of something very noble, they are nought ;
For every day ye dress your fallow kine
With fringes down their cheeks, though unbesought
They lol their heavy heads and drag the wine
And bear the wooden yoke as they were taught
The first day. What ye want is light—indeed
Not sunlight—(ye may well look up surprised

To those unfathomable heavens that feed
Your purple hills)—but God's light organized
In some high soul, crowned capable to lead
The conscious people, conscious and advised,—
For if we lift a people like mere clay,
It falls the same. We want thee, O unfound
And sovran teacher ! if thy beard be grey
Or black, we bid thee rise up from the ground
And speak the word God giveth thee to say,
Inspiring into all this people round,
Instead of passion, thought, which pioneers
All generous passion, purifies from sin,
And strikes the hour for. Rise up, teacher ! here 's
A crowd to make a nation !—best begin
By making each a man, till all be peers
Of earth's true patriots and pure martyrs in
Knowing and daring. Best unbar the doors
Which Peter's heirs keep locked so overclose
They only let the mice across the floors,
While every churchman dangles, as he goes,
The great key at his girdle, and abhors
In Christ's name, meekly. Open wide the house,
Concede the entrance to Christ's liberal mind,
And set the tables with His wine and bread.
What ! "commune in both kinds ?" In every kind—
Wine, wafer, love, hope, truth, unlimited,
Nothing kept back. For when a man is blind
To starlight, will he see the rose is red ?
A bondsman shivering at a Jesuit's foot—
"Væ ! meâ culpâ !" —is not like to stand
A freedman at a despot's and dispute
His titles by the balance in his hand,
Weighing them "suo jure." Tend the root
If careful of the branches, and expand
The inner souls of men before you strive
For civic heroes.

But the teacher, where?

From all these crowded faces, all alive,
Eyes, of their own lids flashing themselves bare,
And brows that with a mobile life contrive
A deeper shadow,—may we in no wise dare
To put a finger out and touch a man,
And cry “this is the leader”? What, all these!
Broad heads, black eyes,—yet not a soul that ran
From God down with a message? all, to please
The donna waving measures with her fan,
And not the judgment-angel on his knees,
(The trumpet just an inch off from his lips)
Who when he breathes next, will put out the sun?

Yet mankind's self were foundered in eclipse,
If lacking doers, with great works to be done;
And lo, the startled earth already dips
Back into light; a better day's begun;
And soon this leader, teacher, will stand plain,
And build the golden pipes and synthesize
This people-organ for a holy strain.
We hold this hope, and still in all these eyes,
Go sounding for the deep look which shall drain
Suffused thought into channelled enterprise.
Where is the teacher? What now may he do,
Who shall do greatly? Doth he gird his waist
With a monk's rope, like Luther? or pursue
The goat, like Tell? or dry his nets in haste,
Like Masaniello when the sky was blue?
Keep house, like other peasants, with inlaced
Bare brawny arms about a favourite child,
And meditative looks beyond the door,
(But not to mark the kidling's teeth have filed
The green shoots of his vine which last year bore
Full twenty bunches), or, on triple-piled
Throne-velvets sit at ease to bless the poor,

Like other pontiffs in the Poorest's name?
The old tiara keeps itself aslope
Upon his steady brows which, all the same,
Bend mildly to permit the people's hope?

Whatever hand shall grasp this oriflamme,
Whatever man (last peasant or first pope
Seeking to free his country) shall appear,
Teach, lead, strike fire into the masses, fill
These empty bladders with fine air, insphere
These wills into a unity of will,
And make of Italy a nation—dear
And blessed be that man! the Heavens shall kill
No leaf the earth lets grow for him, and Death
Shall cast him back upon the lap of Life
To live more surely, in a clarion-breath
Of hero-music. Brutus with the knife,
Rienzi with the fasces, throb beneath
Rome's stones,—and more who threw away joy's fife
Like Pallas, that the beauty of their souls
Might ever shine untroubled and entire :
But if it can be true that he who rolls
The Church's thunders, will reserve her fire
For only light,—from eucharistic bowls
Will pour new life for nations that expire,
And rend the scarlet of his papal vest
To gird the weak loins of his countrymen,—
I hold that he surpasses all the rest
Of Romans, heroes, patriots ; and that when
He sat down on the throne, he dispossessed
The first graves of some glory. See again,
This country-saving is a glorious thing :
And if a common man achieved it ? well.
Say, a rich man did ? excellent. A king ?
That grows sublime. A priest ? improbable.
A pope ? Ah, there we stop, and cannot bring

Our faith up to the leap, with history's bell
So heavy round the neck of it—albeit
We fain would grant the possibility
For *thy* sake, Pio Nono !

Stretch thy feet
In that case—I will kiss them reverently
As any pilgrim to the papal seat :
And, such proved possible, thy throne to me
Shall seem as holy a place as Pellico's
Venetian dungeon, or as Spielberg's grate
At which the Lombard woman hung the rose
Of her sweet soul by its own dewy weight,
To feel the dungeon round her sunshine close,
And, pining so, died early, yet too late
For what she suffered. Yea, I will not choose
Betwixt thy throne, Pope Pius, and the spot
Marked red for ever, spite of rains and dews,
Where Two fell riddled by the Austrian's shot,
The brothers Bandiera, who accuse,
With one same mother-voice and face (that what
They speak may be invincible) the sins
Of earth's tormentors before God the just,
Until the unconscious thunder-bolt begins
To loosen in His grasp.

And yet we must
Beware, and mark the natural kiths and kins
Of circumstance and office, and distrust
The rich man reasoning in a poor man's hut,
The poet who neglects pure truth to prove
Statistic fact, the child who leaves a rut
For a smoother road, the priest who vows his glove
Exhales no grace, the prince who walks afoot,
The woman who has sworn she will not love,
And this Ninth Pius in Seventh Gregory's chair,
With Andrea Doria's forehead !

Count what goes

To making up a pope, before he wear
That triple crown. We pass the world-wide throes
Which went to make the popedom,—the despair
Of free men, good men, wise men ; the dread shows
Of women's faces, by the faggot's flash
Tossed out, to the minutest stir and throb
O' the white lips, the least tremble of a lash,
To glut the red stare of a licensed mob ;
The short mad cries down oubliettes, and plash
So horribly far off ; priests trained to rob,
And kings that, like encouraged nightmares, sate
On nations' hearts most heavily distressed
With monstrous sights and apophthegms of fate—
We pass these things,—because " the times " are prest
With necessary charges of the weight
Of all this sin, and " Calvin, for the rest,
Made bold to burn Servetus. Ah, men err !"—
And so do *Churches* ! which is all we mean
To bring to proof in any register
Of theological fat kine and lean :
So drive them back into the pens ! refer
Old sins (with pourpoint, " quotha " and " I ween,")
Entirely to the old times, the old times ;
Nor ever ask why this preponderant
Infallible pure Church could set her chimes
Most loudly then, just then,—most jubilant,
Precisely then, when mankind stood in crimes
Full heart-deep, and Heaven's judgments were not scant.
Inquire still less, what signifies a Church
Of perfect inspiration and pure laws
Who burns the first man with a brimstone-torch,
And grinds the second, bone by bone, because
The times, forsooth, are used to rack and scorch !
What *is* a holy Church unless she awes
The times down from their sins ? Did Christ select

Such amiable times, to come and teach
Love to, and mercy? The whole world were wrecked
If every mere great man, who lives to reach
A little leaf of popular respect,
Attained not simply by some special breach
In the age's customs, by some precedence
In thought and act, which, having proved him higher
Than those he lived with, proved his competence
In helping them to wonder and aspire.

My words are guiltless of the bigot's sense.
My soul has fire to mingle with the fire
Of all these souls, within or out of doors
Of Rome's church or another. I believe
In one Priest, and one temple with its floors
Of shining jasper gloom'd at morn and eve
By countless knees of earnest auditors,
And crystal walls too lucid to perceive,
That none may take the measure of the place
And say, "So far the porphyry, then, the flint—
To this mark mercy goes, and there ends grace,"
Though still the permeable crystals hint
At some white starry distance, bathed in space.
I feel how nature's ice-crusts keep the dint
Of undersprings of silent Deity.
I hold the articulated gospels which
Show Christ among us crucified on tree.
I love all who love truth, if poor or rich
In what they have won of truth possessively.
No altars and no hands defiled with pitch
Shall scare me off, but I will pray and eat
With all these—taking leave to choose my ewers—
And say at last, "Your visible churches cheat
Their inward types; and, if a church assures
Of standing without failure and defeat,
The same both fails and lies."

To leave which lures
Of wider subject through past years,—behold,
We come back from the popedom to the pope,
To ponder what he *must* be, ere we are bold
For what he *may* be, with our heavy hope
To trust upon his soul. So, fold by fold,
Explore this mummy in the priestly cope,
Transmitted through the darks of time, to catch
The man within the wrappage, and discern
How he, an honest man, upon the watch
Full fifty years for what a man may learn,
Contrived to get just there ; with what a snatch
Of old-world oboli he had to earn
The passage through ; with what a drowsy sop,
To drench the busy barkings of his brain ;
What ghosts of pale tradition, wreathed with hop
'Gainst wakeful thought, he had to entertain
For heavenly visions ; and consent to stop
The clock at noon, and let the hour remain
(Without vain windings-up) inviolate
Against all chimings from the belfry. Lo,
From every given pope you must abate,
Albeit you love him, some things—good, you know—
Which every given heretic you hate,
Assumes for his, as being plainly so.
A pope must hold by popes a little,—yes,
By councils, from Nicæa up to Trent,—
By hierocratic empire, more or less
Irresponsible to men,—he must resent
Each man's particular conscience, and repress
Inquiry, meditation, argument,
As tyrants faction. Also, he must not
Love truth too dangerously, but prefer
“ The interests of the Church,” (because a blot
Is better than a rent, in miniver)—
Submit to see the people swallow hot

Husk-porridge, which his chartered churchmen stir

Quoting the only true God's epigraph,

"Feed my lambs, Peter!"—must consent to sit

Attesting with his pastoral ring and staff

To such a picture of our Lady, hit

Off well by artist-angels, (though not half

As fair as Giotto would have painted it)—

To such a vial, where a dead man's blood

Runs yearly warm beneath a churchman's finger,—

To such a holy house of stone and wood,

Whereof a cloud of angels was the bringer

From Bethlehem to Loreto. Were it good

For any pope on earth to be a flinger

Of stones against these high-niched counterfeits?

Apostates only are iconoclasts.

He dares not say, while this false thing abets

That true thing, "this is false." He keeps his fasts

And prayers, as prayer and fast were silver frets

To change a note upon a string that lasts,

And make a lie a virtue. Now, if he

Did more than this, higher hoped, and braver dared,

I think he were a pope in jeopardy

Or no pope rather, for his truth had barred

The vaulting of his life,—and certainly,

If he do only this, mankind's regard

Moves on from him at once, to seek some new

Teacher and leader. He is good and great

According to the deeds a pope can do ;

Most liberal, save those bonds ; affectionate,

As princes may be, and, as priests are, true ;

But only the ninth Pius after eight,

When all's praised most. At best and hopefullest,

He's pope—we want a man ! his heart beats warm,

But, like the prince enchanted to the waist,

He sits in stone and hardens by a charm

Into the marble of his throne high-placed.

Mild benediction waves his saintly arm—

So, good ! but what we want 's a perfect man,
Complete and all alive : half travertine

Half suits our need, and ill subverts our plan.
Feet, knees, nerves, sinews, energies divine

Were never yet too much for men who ran
In such hard ways as must be this of thine,

Deliverer whom we seek, whoe'er thou art,
Pope, prince, or peasant ! If, indeed, the first,

The noblest, therefore ! since the heroic heart
Within thee must be great enough to burst

Those trammels buckling to the baser part

Thy saintly peers in Rome, who crossed and cursed
With the same finger.

Come, appear, be found,

If pope or peasant, come ! we hear the cock,

The courtier of the mountains when first crowned
With golden dawn ; and orient glories flock

To meet the sun upon the highest ground.

Take voice and work ! we wait to hear thee knock

At some one of our Florentine nine gates,
On each of which was imaged a sublime

Face of a Tuscan genius, which, for hate's
And love's sake, both, our Florence in her prime

Turned boldly on all comers to her states,
As heroes turned their shields in antique time

Emblazoned with honourable acts. And though
The gates are blank now of such images,

And Petrarch looks no more from Nicolo
Toward dear Arezzo, 'twixt the acacia-trees,

Nor Dante, from gate Gallo—still we know,
Despite the razing of the blazonries,

Remains the consecration of the shield :
The dead heroic faces will start out

On all these gates, if foes should take the field,

And blend sublimely, at the earliest shout,
With living heroes who will scorn to yield
A hair's-breadth even, when, gazing round about,
They find in what a glorious company
They fight the foes of Florence. Who will grudge
His one poor life, when that great man we see
Has given five hundred years, the world being judge
To help the glory of his Italy?
Who, born the fair side of the Alps, will budge,
When Dante stays, when Ariosto stays,
When Petrarch stays for ever? Ye bring swords,
My Tuscans? Ay, if wanted in this haze,
Bring swords: but first bring souls!—bring thoughts and
words,
Unruled by a tear of yesterday's
Yet awful by its wrong,—and cut these cords,
And mow this green lush falseness to the roots,
And shut the mouth of hell below the swathe!
And, if ye can bring songs too, let the lute's
Recoverable music softly bathe
Some poet's hand, that, through all bursts and bruits
Of popular passion, all unripe and rathe
Convictions of the popular intellect,
Ye may not lack a finger up the air,
Annunciative, reproving, pure, erect,
To show which way your first Ideal bare
The whiteness of its wings when (sorely pecked
By falcons on your wrists) it unaware
Arose up overhead and out of sight.

Meanwhile, let all the far ends of the world
Breathe back the deep breath of their old delight,
To swell the Italian banner just unfurled.
Help, lands of Europe! for, if Austria fight,
The drums will bar your slumber. Had ye curled
The laurel for your thousand artists' brows,

If these Italian hands had planted none?
Can any sit down idle in the house
Nor hear appeals from Buonarroti's stone
And Raffael's canvas, rousing and to rouse?
Where's Poussin's master? Gallic Avignon
Bred Laura, and Vaucluse's fount has stirred
The heart of France too strongly, as it lets
Its little stream out, (like a wizard's bird
Which bounds upon its emerald wing and wets
The rocks on each side) that she should not gird
Her loins with Charlemagne's sword when foes beset
The country of her Petrarch. Spain may well
Be minded how from Italy she caught,
To mingle with her tinkling Moorish bell,
A fuller cadence and a subtler thought.
And even the New World, the receptacle
Of freemen, may send glad men, as it ought,
To greet Vespucci Amerigo's door.
While England claims, by trump of poetry,
Verona, Venice, the Ravenna-shore,
And dearer holds John Milton's Fiesole
Than Langlande's Malvern with the stars in flower.

And Vallombrosa, we two went to see
Last June, beloved companion!—where sublime
The mountains live in holy families,
And the slow pinewoods ever climb and climb
Half up their breasts, just stagger as they seize
Some grey crag, drop back with it many a time,
And straggle blindly down the precipice.
The Vallombrosan brooks were strewn as thick
That June-day, knee-deep with dead beechen leaves,
As Milton saw them ere his heart grew sick
And his eyes blind. I think the monks and bees
Are all the same too: scarce have they changed the
wick

On good St. Gualbert's altar which receives
The convent's pilgrims ; and the pool in front
(Wherein the hill-stream trout are cast, to wait
The beatific vision and the grunt
Used at refectory) keeps its weedy state,
To baffle saintly abbots who would count
The fish across their breviary nor 'bate
The measure of their steps. O waterfalls
And forests ! sound and silence ! mountains bare
That leap up peak by peak and catch the palls
Of purple and silver mist to rend and share
With one another, at electric calls
Of life in the sunbeams,—till we cannot dare
Fix your shapes, count your number ! we must think
Your beauty and your glory helped to fill
The cup of Milton's soul so to the brink,
He never more was thirsty when God's will
Had shattered to his sense the last chain-link
By which he had drawn from Nature's visible
The fresh well-water. Satisfied by this,
He sang of Adam's paradise and smiled,
Remembering Vallombrosa. Therefore is
The place divine to English man and child,
And pilgrims leave their souls here in a kiss.

For Italy's the whole earth's treasury, piled
With reveries of gentle ladies, flung
Aside, like ravelled silk, from life's worn stuff ;
With coins of scholars' fancy, which, being rung
On work-day counter, still sound silver-proof ;
In short, with all the dreams of dreamers young,
Before their heads have time for slipping off
Hope's pillow to the ground. How oft, indeed,
We 've sent our souls out from the rigid north,
On bare white feet which would not print nor bleed,
To climb the Alpine passes and look forth,

Where booming low the Lombard rivers lead
To gardens, vineyards, all a dream is worth,—

Sights, thou and I, Love, have seen afterward
From Tuscan Bellosguardo, wide awake,¹

When, standing on the actual blessed sward
Where Galileo stood at nights to take

The vision of the stars, we have found it hard,
Gazing upon the earth and heaven, to make
A choice of beauty.

Therefore let us all
Refreshed in England or in other land,

By visions, with their fountain-rise and fall,
Of this earth's darling,—we, who understand
A little how the Tuscan musical

Vowels do round themselves as if they planned

Eternities of separate sweetness,—we,

Who loved Sorrento vines in picture-book,

Or ere in wine-cup we pledged faith or glee,—

Who loved Rome's wolf with demi-gods at suck,

Or ere we loved truth's own divinity,—

Who loved, in brief, the classic hill and brook,

And Ovid's dreaming tales and Petrarch's song,

Or ere we loved Love's self even,—let us give

The blessing of our souls, (and wish them strong

To bear it to the height where prayers arrive,

When faithful spirits pray against a wrong),

To this great cause of southern men who strive

In God's name for man's rights, and shall not fail !

Behold, they shall not fail. The shouts ascend

Above the shrieks, in Naples, and prevail.

Rows of shot corpses, waiting for the end

Of burial, seem to smile up straight and pale
Into the azure air and apprehend

¹ Galileo's villa, close to Florence, is built on an eminence called Bellosguardo.

That final gun-flash from Palermo's coast
Which lightens their apocalypse of death.
So, let them die ! The world shows nothing lost ;
Therefore, not blood. Above or underneath,
What matter, brothers, if ye keep your post
On duty's side ? As sword returns to sheath,
So dust to grave, but souls find place in Heaven.
Heroic daring is the true success,
The eucharistic bread requires no leaven ;
And though your ends were hopeless, we should bless
Your cause as holy. Strive—and, having striven,
Take, for God's recompense, that righteousness !

PART II.

I WROTE a meditation and a dream,
Hearing a little child sing in the street :
I leant upon his music as a theme,
Till it gave way beneath my heart's full beat
Which tried at an exultant prophecy
But dropped before the measure was complete—
Alas, for songs and hearts ! O Tuscany,
O Dante's Florence, is the type too plain ?
Didst thou, too, only sing of liberty
As little children take up a high strain
With unintentioned voices, and break off
To sleep upon their mothers' knees again ?
Couldst thou not watch one hour ? then, sleep enough—
That sleep may hasten manhood and sustain
The faint pale spirit with some muscular stuff.

But we, who cannot slumber as thou dost,
We thinkers, who have thought for thee and failed,
We hopers, who have hoped for thee and lost,
We poets, wandered round by dreams,¹ who hailed

¹ See the opening passage of the 'Agamemnon' of Æschylus.

From this Atrides' roof (with lintel-post
Which still drips blood,—the worse part hath prevailed)

The fire-voice of the beacons to declare
Troy taken, sorrow ended,—cozened through

A crimson sunset in a misty air,
What now remains for such as we, to do?

God's judgments, peradventure, will He bare
To the roots of thunder, if we kneel and sue?

From Casa Guidi windows I looked forth,
And saw ten thousand eyes of Florentines
Flash back the triumph of the Lombard north,—

Saw fifty banners, freighted with the signs

And exultations of the awakened earth,
Float on above the multitude in lines,

Straight to the Pitti. So, the vision went.

And so, between those populous rough hands

Raised in the sun, Duke Leopold outleant,
And took the patriot's oath which henceforth stands

Among the oaths of perjurers, eminent
To catch the lightnings ripened for these lands.

Why swear at all, thou false Duke Leopold?
What need to swear? What need to boast thy blood

Unspoilt of Austria, and thy heart unsold
Away from Florence? It was understood

God made thee not too vigorous or too bold;

And men had patience with thy quiet mood,

And women, pity, as they saw thee pace
Their festive streets with premature grey hairs.

We turned the mild dejection of thy face
To princely meanings, took thy wrinkling cares

For ruffling hopes, and called thee weak, not base.

Nay, better light the torches for more prayers

And smoke the pale Madonnas at the shrine,

Being still "our poor Grand-duke, our good Grand-duke,
Who cannot help the Austrian in his line,"—

Than write an oath upon a nation's book
For men to spit at with scorn's blurring brine !
Who dares forgive what none can overlook ?

For me, I do repent me in this dust
Of towns and temples which makes Italy,—
I sigh amid the sighs which breathe a gust
Of dying century to century

Around us on the uneven crater-crust
Of these old worlds,—I bow my soul and knee.

Absolve me, patriots, of my woman's fault
That ever I believed the man was true !

These sceptred strangers shun the common salt,
And, therefore, when the general board 's in view
And they stand up to carve for blind and halt,
The wise suspect the viands which ensue.

I much repent that, in this time and place
Where many corpse-lights of experience burn
From Cæsar's and Lorenzo's festering race,
To enlighten groping reasoners, I could learn
No better counsel for a simple case
Than to put faith in princes, in my turn.

Had all the death-piles of the ancient years
Flared up in vain before me ? knew I not

What stench arises from some purple gears ?
And how the sceptres witness whence they got
Their briar-wood, crackling through the atmosphere's
Foul smoke, by princely perjuries, kept hot ?

Forgive me, ghosts of patriots,—Brutus, thou,
Who trailest downhill into life again

Thy blood-weighed cloak, to indict me with thy slow
Reproachful eyes !—for being taught in vain

That, while the illegitimate Cæsars show
Of meaner stature than the first full strain,
(Confessed incompetent to conquer Gaul)
They swoon as feebly and cross Rubicons

As rashly as any Julius of them all !
Forgive, that I forgot the mind which runs
Through absolute races, too unsceptical !
I saw the man amongst his little sons,
His lips were warm with kisses while he swore ;
And I, because I am a woman, I,
Who felt my own child's coming life before
The prescience of my soul, and held faith high,—
I could not bear to think, whoever bore,
That lips, so warmed, could shape so cold a lie.

From Casa Guidi windows I looked out,
Again looked, and beheld a different sight.
The Duke had fled before the people's shout
" Long live the Duke ! " A people, to speak right,
Must speak as soft as courtiers, lest a doubt
Should curdle brows of gracious sovereigns, white.
Moreover that same dangerous shouting meant
Some gratitude for future favours, which
Were only promised, the Constituent
Implied, the whole being subject to the hitch
In " motu proprios," very incident
To all these Czars, from Paul to Paulovitch.
Whereat the people rose up in the dust
Of the ruler's flying feet, and shouted still
And loudly ; only, this time, as was just,
Not " Live the Duke," who had fled for good or ill,
But " Live the People," who remained and must,
The unrenounced and unrenounceable.

Long live the people ! How they lived ! and boiled
And bubbled in the cauldron of the street :
How the young blustered, nor the old recoiled,
And what a thunderous stir of tongues and feet
Trode flat the palpitating bells and foiled
The joy-gurs of their echo, shattering it !

How down they pulled the Duke's arms everywhere !
How up they set new café-signs, to show

Where patriots might sip ices in pure air—
(The fresh paint smelling somewhat) ! To and fro

How marched the civic guard, and stopped to stare
When boys broke windows in a civic glow !

How rebel songs were sung to loyal tunes,
And bishops cursed in ecclesiastic metres :

How all the Circoli grew large as moons,
And all the speakers, moonstruck,—thankful greeters

Of prospects which struck poor the ducal boons,
A mere free Press, and Chambers !—frank repeaters

Of great Guerazzi's praises—"There 's a man,
The father of the land, who, truly great,

Takes off that national disgrace and ban,
The farthing tax upon our Florence-gate,

And saves Italia as he only can ! "

How all the nobles fled, and would not wait,

Because they were most noble,—which being so,
How liberals vowed to burn their palaces,

Because free Tuscans were not free to go !

How grown men raged at Austria's wickedness,

And smoked,—while fifty striplings in a row
Marched straight to Piedmont for the wrong's redress !

You say we failed in duty, we who wore
Black velvet like Italian democrats,

Who slashed our sleeves like patriots, nor forswore
The true republic in the form of hats ?

We chased the archbishop from the Duomo-door,
We chalked the walls with bloody caveats

Against all tyrants. If we did not fight
Exactly, we fired muskets up the air

To show that victory was ours of right.

We met, had free discussion everywhere

(Except perhaps i' the Chambers) day and night.

We proved the poor should be employed.—that 's fair,—

And yet the rich not worked for anyone,—
Pay certified, yet payers abrogated,—
Full work secured, yet liabilities
To over-work excluded,—not one bated
Of all our holidays, that still, at twice
Or thrice a week, are moderately rated.
We proved that Austria was dislodged, or would
Or should be, and that Tuscany in arms
Should, would dislodge her, ending the old feud ;
And yet, to leave our piazzas, shops, and farms,
For the simple sake of fighting, was not good—
We proved that also. “ Did we carry charms
Against being killed ourselves, that we should rush
On killing others ? what, desert herewith
Our wives and mothers ?—was that duty ? tush ! ”
At which we shook the sword within the sheath
Like heroes—only louder ; and the flush
Ran up the cheek to meet the future wreath.
Nay, what we proved, we shouted—how we shouted,
(Especially the boys did) boldly planting
That tree of liberty, whose fruit is doubted,
Because the roots are not of nature's granting !
A tree of good and evil : none, without it,
Grow gods ; alas and, with it, men are wanting !

O holy knowledge, holy liberty,
O holy rights of nations ! If I speak
These bitter things against the jugglery
Of days that in your names proved blind and weak,
It is that tears are bitter. When we see
The brown skulls grin at death in churchyards bleak,
We do not cry, “ This Yorick is too light,”
For death grows deathlier with that mouth he makes.
So with my mocking : bitter things I write
Because my soul is bitter for your sakes,
O freedom ! O my Florence !

Men who might

Do greatly in a universe that breaks

And burns, must ever *know* before they do.

Courage and patience are but sacrifice ;

And sacrifice is offered for and to

Something conceived of. Each man pays a price

For what himself counts precious, whether true
Or false the appreciation it implies.

But here,—no knowledge, no conception, nought !
Desire was absent, that provides great deeds

From out the greatness of prevenient thought :
And action, action, like a flame that needs

A steady breath and fuel, being caught

Up, like a burning reed from other reeds,

Flashed in the empty and uncertain air,
Then wavered, then went out. Behold, who blames

A crooked course, when not a goal is there
To round the fervid striving of the games ?

An ignorance of means may minister

To greatness, but an ignorance of aims

Makes it impossible to be great at all.

So, with our Tuscans ! Let none dare to say,

“ Here virtue never can be national ;

Here fortitude can never cut a way

Between the Austrian muskets, out of thrall : ”

I tell you rather that whoever may

Discern true ends here, shall grow pure enough
To love them, brave enough to strive for them,

And strong to reach them though the roads be rough :
That having learnt—by no mere apophthegm—

Not just the draping of a graceful stuff
About a statue, broidered at the hem—

Not just the trilling on an opera-stage
Of “ *libertà* ” to bravos—(a fair word,

Yet too allied to inarticulate rage
And breathless sobs, for singing, though the chord

Were deeper than they struck it)—but the gauge
Of civil wants sustained and wrongs abhorred,
The serious sacred meaning and full use
Of freedom for a nation,—then, indeed,
Our Tuscans, underneath the bloody dew
Of some new morning, rising up agreed
And bold, will want no Saxon souls or thews
To sweep their piazzas clear of Austria's breed.

Alas, alas, it was not so this time.
Conviction was not, courage failed, and truth
Was something to be doubted of. The mime
Changed masks, because a mime. The tide as smooth
In running in as out, no sense of crime
Because no sense of virtue,—sudden ruth
Seized on the people : they would have again
Their good Grand-duke and leave Guerazzi, though
He took that tax from Florence. " Much in vain
He takes it from the market-carts, we trow,
While urgent that no market-men remain,
But all march off and leave the spade and plough,
To die among the Lombards. Was it thus
The dear paternal Duke did? Live the Duke !"
At which the joy-bells multitudinous,
Swept by an opposite wind, as loudly shook.
Call back the mild archbishop to his house,
To bless the people with his frightened look,—
He shall not yet be hanged, you comprehend !
Seize on Guerazzi ; guard him in full view,
Or else we stab him in the back, to end !
Rub out those chalked devices, set up new
The Duke's arms, doff your Phrygian caps, and mend
The pavement of the piazzas broke into
By barren poles of freedom : smooth the way
For the ducal carriage, lest his highness sigh
" Here trees of liberty grew yesterday !",

"Long live the Duke!"—how roared the cannonry,
How rocked the bell-towers, and through thickening
spray
Of nosegays, wreaths, and kerchiefs tossed on high,
How marched the civic guard, the people still
Being good at shouts, especially the boys!
Alas, poor people, of an unfledged will
Most fitly expressed by such a callow voice!
Alas, still poorer Duke, incapable
Of being worthy even of so much noise!

You think he came back instantly, with thanks
And tears in his faint eyes, and hands extended
To stretch the franchise through their utmost ranks?
That having, like a father, apprehended,
He came to pardon fatherly those pranks
Played out and now in filial service ended?
That some love-token, like a prince, he threw
To meet the people's love-call, in return?
Well, how he came I will relate to you;
And if your hearts should burn, why, hearts *must* burn,
To make the ashes which things old and new
Shall be washed clean in—as this Duke will learn.

From Casa Guidi windows gazing, then,
I saw and witness how the Duke came back.
The regular tramp of horse and tread of men
Did smite the silence like an anvil black
And sparkless. With her wide eyes at full strain,
Our Tuscan nurse exclaimed, "Alack, alack,
Signora! these shall be the Austrians." "Nay,
Be still," I answered, "do not wake the child!"
—For so, my two-months' baby sleeping lay
In milky dreams upon the bed and smiled,
And I thought "he shall sleep on, while he may,
Through the world's baseness: not being yet defiled,

Why should he be disturbed by what is done?"
Then, gazing, I beheld the long-drawn street
Live out, from end to end, full in the sun,
With Austria's thousand ; sword and bayonet,
Horse, foot, artillery,—cannons rolling on
Like blind slow storm-clouds gestant with the heat
Of undeveloped lightnings, each bestrode
By a single man, dust-white from head to heel,
Indifferent as the dreadful thing he rode,
Like a sculptured Fate serene and terrible.
As some smooth river which has overflowed
Will slow and silent down its current wheel
A loosened forest, all the pines erect,
So swept, in mute significance of storm,
The marshalled thousands ; not an eye deflect
To left or right, to catch a novel form
Of Florence city adorned by architect
And carver, or of Beauties live and warm
Scared at the casements,—all, straightforward eyes
And faces, held as steadfast as their swords,
And cognizant of acts, not imageries.
The key, O Tuscans, too well fits the wards !
Ye asked for mimes,—these bring you tragedies :
For purple,—these shall wear it as your lords.
Ye played like children,—die like innocents.
Ye mimicked lightnings with a torch,—the crack
Of the actual bolt, your pastime circumvents.
Ye called up ghosts, believing they were slack
To follow any voice from Gilboa's tents,—
Here's Samuel !—and, so, Grand-dukes come back !

And yet, they are no prophets though they come :
That awful mantle, they are drawing close,
Shall be searched, one day, by the shafts of Doom
Through double folds now hoodwinking the brows.
Resuscitated monarchs disentomb

Grave-reptiles with them, in their new life-throes.

Let such beware. Behold, the people waits,

Like God : as He, in His serene of might,

So they, in their endurance of long straits.

Ye stamp no nation out, though day and night

Ye tread them with that absolute heel which grates

And grinds them flat from all attempted height.

You kill worms sooner with a garden-spade

Than you kill peoples : peoples will not die ;

The tail curls stronger when you lop the head :

They writhe at every wound and multiply

And shudder into a heap of life that's made

Thus vital from God's own vitality.

'T is hard to shrivel back a day of God's

Once fixed for judgment ; 't is as hard to change

The peoples, when they rise beneath their loads

And heave them from their backs with violent wrench

To crush the oppressor : for that judgment-rod's

The measure of this popular revenge.

Meanwhile, from Casa Guidi windows, we

Beheld the armament of Austria flow

Into the drowning heart of Tuscany :

And yet none wept, none cursed, or, if 't was so,

They wept and cursed in silence. Silently

Our noisy Tuscans watched the invading foe ;

They had learnt silence. Pressed against the wall,

And grouped upon the church-steps opposite,

A few pale men and women stared at all.

God knows what they were feeling, with their white

Constrained faces, they, so prodigal

Of cry and gesture when the world goes right,

Or wrong indeed. But here was depth of wrong,

And here, still water ; they were silent here ;

And through that sentient silence, struck along

That measured tramp from which it stood out clear,

Distinct the sound and silence, like a gong
At midnight, each by the other awfuller,—
While every soldier in his cap displayed
A leaf of olive. Dusty, bitter thing !
Was such plucked at Novara, it is said ?

A cry is up in England, which doth ring
The hollow world through, that for ends of trade
And virtue and God's better worshipping,
We henceforth should exalt the name of Peace
And leave those rusty wars that eat the soul,—
Besides their clippings at our golden fleece.
I, too, have loved peace, and from bole to bole
Of immemorial undeciduous trees
Would write, as lovers use upon a scroll,
The holy name of Peace and set it high
Where none could pluck it down. On trees, I say,—
Not upon gibbets !—with the greenery
Of dewy branches and the flowery May,
Sweet mediation betwixt earth and sky
Providing, for the shepherd's holiday.
Not upon gibbets ! though the vulture leaves
The bones to quiet, which he first picked bare.
Not upon dungeons ! though the wretch who grieves
And groans within, less stirs the outer air
Than any little field-mouse stirs the sheaves.
Not upon chain-bolts ! though the slave's despair
Has dulled his helpless miserable brain
And left him blank beneath the freeman's whip
To sing and laugh out idiocies of pain.
Nor yet on starving homes ! where many a lip
Has sobbed itself asleep through curses vain.
I love no peace which is not fellowship
And which includes not mercy. I would have
Rather the raking of the guns across
The world, and shrieks against Heaven's architrave ;

Rather the struggle in the slippery fosse
Of dying men and horses, and the wave
Blood-bubbling. . . . Enough said !—by Christ's own
cross,

And by this faint heart of my womanhood,
Such things are better than a Peace that sits
Beside a hearth in self-commended mood,
And takes no thought how wind and rain by fits
Are howling out of doors against the good
Of the poor wanderer. What ! your peace admits
Of outside anguish while it keeps at home ?
I loathe to take its name upon my tongue.
'T is nowise peace ; 't is treason, stiff with doom,—
'T is gagged despair and inarticulate wrong,
Annihilated Poland, stifled Rome,
Dazed Naples, Hungary fainting 'neath the thong,
And Austria wearing a smooth olive-leaf
On her brute forehead, while her hoofs outpress
The life from these Italian souls, in brief.
O Lord of Peace, who art Lord of Righteousness,
Constrain the anguished worlds from sin and grief,
Pierce them with conscience, purge them with redress,
And give us peace which is no counterfeit !

But wherefore should we look out any more
From Casa Guidi windows ? Shut them straight,
And let us sit down by the folded door,
And veil our saddened faces and, so, wait
What next the judgment-heavens make ready for.
I have grown too weary for these windows. Sights
Come thick enough and clear enough in thought,
Without the sunshine ; souls have inner lights.
And since the Grand-duke has come back and brought
This army of the North which thus requites
His filial South, we leave him to be taught.
His South, too, has learnt something certainly,

Whereof the practice will bring profit soon ;
And peradventure other eyes may see,
From Casa Guidi windows, what is done
Or undone. Whatsoever deeds they be,
Pope Pius will be glorified in none.

Record that gain, Mazzini !—it shall top
Some heights of sorrow. Peter's rock, so named,
Shall lure no vessel any more to drop
Among the breakers. Peter's chair is shamed
Like any vulgar throne the nations lop
To pieces for their firewood unreclaimed,—
And, when it burns too, we shall see as well
In Italy as elsewhere. Let it burn.

The cross, accounted still adorable,
Is Christ's cross only !—if the thief's would earn
Some stealthy genuflexions, we rebel ;
And here the impenitent thief's has had its turn,
As God knows ; and the people on their knees
Scoff and toss back the crosiers stretched like yokes
To press their heads down lower by degrees.
So Italy, by means of these last strokes,
Escapes the danger which preceded these,
Of leaving captured hands in cloven oaks,—
Of leaving very souls within the buckle
Whence bodies struggled outward,—of supposing
That freemen may like bondsmen kneel and truckle,
And then stand up as usual, without losing
An inch of stature.

Those whom she-wolves suckle
Will bite as wolves do in the grapple-closing
Of adverse interests. This at last is known,
(Thank Pius for the lesson) that albeit
Among the popedom's hundred heads of stone
Which blink down on you from the roof's retreat
In Siena's tiger-striped cathedral, Joan

And Borgia 'mid their fellows you may greet,
A harlot and a devil,—you will see
Not a man, still less angel, grandly set
With open soul to render man more free.
The fishers are still thinking of the net,
And, if not thinking of the hook too, we
Are counted somewhat deeply in their debt ;
But that 's a rare case—so, by hook and crook
They take the advantage, agonizing Christ
By rustier nails than those of Cedron's brook,
I' the people's body, very cheaply priced,—
And quote high priesthood out of Holy book,
While buying death-fields with the sacrificed.

Priests, priests,—there 's no such name !—God's own,
except
Ye take most vainly. Through heaven's lifted gate
The priestly ephod in sole glory swept
When Christ ascended, entered in, and sate
(With victor face sublimely overwept)
At Deity's right hand, to mediate
He alone, He for ever. On His breast
The Urim and the Thummim, fed with fire
From the full Godhead, flicker with the unrest
Of human pitiful heartbeats. Come up higher,
All Christians ! Levi's tribe is dispossessed.
That solitary alb ye shall admire,
But not cast lots for. The last chrism, poured right,
Was on that Head, and poured for burial
And not for domination in men's sight.
What *are* these churches ? The old temple-wall
Doth overlook them juggling with the sleight
Of surplice, candlestick and altar-pall ;
East church and west church, ay, north church and
south,
Rome's church and England's,—let them all repent,

And makes concordats 'twixt their soul and mouth,
 Succeed St. Paul by working at the tent,
 Become infallible guides by speaking truth,
 And excommunicate their pride that bent
 And cramped the souls of men.

Why, even here
 Priestcraft burns out, the twinèd linen blazes ;
 Not, like asbestos, to grow white and clear,
 But all to perish !—while the fire-smell raises
 To life some swooning spirits who, last year,
 Lost breath and heart in these church-stifled places.
 Why, almost, through this Pius, we believed
 The priesthood could be an honest thing,—he smiled
 So saintly while our corn was being sheaved
 For his own granaries ! Showing now defiled
 His hireling hands, a better help 's achieved
 Than if they blessed us shepherd-like and mild.
 False doctrine, strangled by its own amen,
 Dies in the throat of all this nation. Who
 Will speak a pope's name as they rise again ?
 What woman or what child will count him true ?
 What dreamer, praise him with the voice or pen ?
 What man, fight for him ?—Pius takes his due.

Record that gain, Mazzini !—Yes, but first
 Set down thy people's faults ; set down the want
 Of soul-conviction ; set down aims dispersed,
 And incoherent means, and valour scant
 Because of scanty faith, and schisms accursed
 That wrench these brother-hearts from covenant
 With freedom and each other. Set down this,
 And this, and see to overcome it when
 The seasons bring the fruits thou wilt not miss
 If wary. Let no cry of patriot men
 Distract thee from the stern analysis

Of masses who cry only ! keep thy ken
 Clear as thy soul is virtuous. Heroes' blood
 Splashed up against thy noble brow in Rome ;
 Let such not blind thee to an interlude
 Which was not also holy, yet did come
 'Twixt sacramental actions,—brotherhood
 Despised even there, and something of the doom
 Of Remus in the trenches. Listen now—
 Rossi died silent near where Cæsar died.
 HE did not say, " My Brutus, is it thou ?"
 But Italy unquestioned testified
 " I killed him ! I am Brutus—I avow."
 At which the whole world's laugh of scorn replied,
 " A poor maimed copy of Brutus !"

Too much like,

Indeed, to be so unlike ! too unskilled
 At Philippi and the honest battle-pike,
 To be so skilful where a man is killed
 Near Pompey's statue, and the daggers strike
 At unawares i' the throat. Was thus fulfilled
 An omen once of Michel Angelo?—
 When Marcus Brutus he conceived complete,
 And strove to hurl him out by blow on blow
 Upon the marble, at Art's thunderheat,
 Till haply (some pre-shadow rising slow
 Of what his Italy would fancy meet
 To be called BRUTUS) straight his plastic hand
 Fell back before his prophet-soul, and left
 A fragment, a maimed Brutus,—but more grand
 Than this, so named at Rome, was !

Let thy weft

Present one woof and warp, Mazzini ! Stand
 With no man hankering for a dagger's heft,
 No, not for Italy !—nor stand apart,
 No, not for the Republic !—from those pure
 Brave men who hold the level of thy heart

In patriot truth, as lover and as doer,
Albeit they will not follow where thou art
As extreme theorist. Trust and distrust fewer ;
And so bind strong and keep unstained the cause
Which (God's sign granted) war-trumps newly blown
Shall yet annunciate to the world's applause.

But now, the world is busy ; it has grown
A Fair-going world. Imperial England draws
The flowing ends of the earth from Fez, Canton,
Delhi and Stockholm, Athens and Madrid,
The Russias and the vast Americas,
As if a queen drew in her robes amid
Her golden cincture,—isles, peninsulas,
Capes, continents, far inland countries hid
By jasper-sands and hills of chrysopras,
All trailing in their splendours through the door
Of the gorgeous Crystal Palace. Every nation,
To every other nation strange of yore,
Gives face to face the civic salutation,
And holds up in a proud right hand before
That congress the best work which she can fashion
By her best means. "These corals, will you please
To match against your oaks? They grow as fast
Within my wilderness of purple seas."—
"This diamond stared upon me as I passed
(As a live god's eye from a marble frieze)
Along a dark of diamonds. Is it classed?"—
"I wove these stuffs so subtly that the gold
Swims to the surface of the silk like cream
And curdles to fair patterns. Ye behold!"—
"These delicatest muslins rather seem
Than be, you think? Nay, touch them and be bold,
Though such veiled Chakhi's face in Hafiz' dream."—
"These carpets—you walk slow on them like kings,

Inaudible like spirits, while your foot

Dips deep in velvet roses and such things."—

"Even Apollonius might commend this flute : ¹

The music, winding through the stops, upsprings
To make the player very rich : compute !"

"Here's goblet-glass, to take in with your wine
The very sun its grapes were ripened under :

Drink light and juice together, and each fine."—

"This model of a steam-ship moves your wonder ?

You should behold it crushing down the brine
Like a blind Jove who feels his way with thunder."—

"Here's sculpture ! Ah, *we* live too ! why not throw
Our life into our marbles ? Art has place

For other artists after Angelo."—

"I tried to paint out here a natural face ;

For nature includes Raffael, as we know,
Not Raffael nature. Will it help my case ?"—

"Methinks you will not match this steel of ours !"—

"Nor you this porcelain ! One might dream the clay
Retained in it the larvæ of the flowers,

They bud so, round the cup, the old Spring-way."—

"Nor you these carven woods, where birds in bowers
With twisting snakes and climbing cupids, play."

O Magi of the east and of the west,
Your incense, gold and myrrh are excellent !—

What gifts for Christ, then, bring ye with the rest ?
Your hands have worked well : is your courage spent

In handwork only ? Have you nothing best,
Which generous souls may perfect and present,

And He shall thank the givers for ? no light
Of teaching, liberal nations, for the poor

Who sit in darkness when it is not night ?

¹ Philostratus relates of Apollonius how he objected to the musical instrument of Linus the Rhodian, that it could not enrich or beautify. The historian of music in our day would satisfy the philosopher on one point at least.

No cure for wicked children ? Christ,—no cure !
No help for women sobbing out of sight
Because men made the laws ? no brothel-lure
Burnt out by popular lightnings ? Hast thou found
No remedy, my England, for such woes ?
No outlet, Austria, for the scourged and bound,
No entrance for the exiled ? no repose,
Russia, for knouted Poles worked underground,
And gentle ladies bleached among the snows ?
No mercy for the slave, America ?
No hope for Rome, free France, chivalric France ?
Alas, great nations have great shames, I say.
No pity, O world, no tender utterance
Of benediction, and prayers stretched this way
For poor Italia, baffled by mischance ?
O gracious nations, give some ear to me !
You all go to your Fair, and I am one
Who at the roadside of humanity
Beseech your alms,—God's justice to be done.
So, prosper !

In the name of Italy,
Meantime, her patriot Dead have benison.
They only have done well ; and, what they did
Being perfect, it shall triumph. Let them slumber :
No king of Egypt in a pyramid
Is safer from oblivion, though he number
Full seventy cerements for a coverlid.
These Dead be seeds of life, and shall encumber
The sad heart of the land until it loose
The clammy clods and let out the Spring-growth
In beatific green through every bruise.
The tyrant should take heed to what he doth,
Since every victim-carrion turns to use,
And drives a chariot, like a god made wroth,
Against each piled injustice. Ay, the least,
Dead for Italia, not in vain has died ;
Though many vainly, ere life's struggle ceased,

To mad dissimilar ends have swerved aside ;
Each grave her nationality has pieced
By its own majestic breadth, and fortified
And pinned it deeper to the soil. Forlorn
Of thanks be, therefore, no one of these graves !
Not Hers,—who, at her husband's side, in scorn,
Outfaced the whistling shot and hissing waves
Until she felt her little babe unborn
Recoil, within her, from the violent staves
And bloodhounds of the world,—at which, her life
Dropt inwards from her eyes and followed it
Beyond the hunters. Garibaldi's wife
And child died so. And now, the sea-weeds fit
Her body, like a proper shroud and coif,
And murmurously the ebbing waters grit
The little pebbles while she lies interred
In the sea-sand. Perhaps, ere dying thus,
She looked up in his face (which never stirred
From its clenched anguish) as to make excuse
For leaving him for his, if so she erred.
He well remembers that she could not choose.
A memorable grave ! Another is
At Genoa. There, a king may fitly lie,
Who, bursting that heroic heart of his
At lost Novara, that he could not die—
(Though thrice into the cannon's eyes for this
He plunged his shuddering steed, and felt the sky
Reel back between the fire-shocks)—stripped away
The ancestral ermine ere the smoke had cleared,
And, naked to the soul, that none might say
His kingship covered what was base and bleared
With treason, went out straight an exile, yea,
An exiled patriot. Let him be revered.

Yea, verily, Charles Albert has died well ;
And if he lived not all so, as one spoke,

The sin pass softly with the passing-bell :
 For he was shriven, I think, in cannon-smoke,
 And, taking off his crown, made visible
 A hero's forehead. Shaking Austria's yoke
 He shattered his own hand and heart. "So best,"
 His last words were upon his lonely bed,
 "I do not end like popes and dukes at least—
 Thank God for it." And now that he is dead,
 Admitting it is proved and manifest
 That he was worthy, with a discrowned head,
 To measure heights with patriots, let them stand
 Beside the man in his Oporto shroud,
 And each vouchsafe to take him by the hand,
 And kiss him on the cheek, and say aloud,—
 "Thou, too, hast suffered for our native land !
 My brother, thou art one of us ! be proud."

Still, graves, when Italy is talked upon.
 Still, still, the patriot's tomb, the stranger's hate.
 Still Niobe ! still fainting in the sun,
 By whose most dazzling arrows violate
 Her beauteous offspring perished ! Has she won
 Nothing but garlands for the graves, from Fate ?
 Nothing but death-songs ?—Yes, be it understood,
 Life throbs in noble Piedmont ! while the feet
 Of Rome's clay image, dabbled soft in blood,
 Grow flat with dissolution and, as meet,
 Will soon be shovelled off like other mud,
 To leave the passage free in church and street.
 And I, who first took hope up in this song.
 Because a child was singing one,—behold,
 The hope and omen were not, haply, wrong !
 Poets are soothsayers still, like those of old
 Who studied flights of doves ; and creatures young
 And tender, mighty meanings, may unfold.

The sun strikes, through the windows, up the floor ;
Stand out in it, my own young Florentine,
Not two years old, and let me see thee more !
It grows along thy amber curls, to shine
Brighter than elsewhere. Now, look straight before,
And fix thy brave blue English eyes on mine,
And from my soul, which fronts the future so,
With unabashed and unabated gaze,
Teach me to hope for, what the angels know
When they smile clear as thou dost. Down God's ways
With just alighted feet, between the snow
And snowdrops, where a little lamb may graze,
Thou hast no fear, my lamb, about the road,
Albeit in our vain-glory we assume
That, less than we have, thou hast learnt of God.
Stand out, my blue-eyed prophet !—thou, to whom
The earliest world-day light that ever flowed,
Through Casa Guidi windows chanced to come !
Now shake the glittering nimbus of thy hair,
And be God's witness that the elemental
New springs of life are gushing everywhere
To cleanse the water-courses, and prevent all
Concrete obstructions which infest the air !
That earth 's alive, and gentle or ungente
Motions within her, signify but growth !—
The grounds swells greenest o'er the labouring moles.
Howe'er the uneasy world is vexed and wroth,
Young children, lifted high on parent souls,
Look round them with a smile upon the mouth,
And take for music every bell that tolls ;
(WHO said we should be better if like these?)
But *we* sit murmuring for the future though
Posterity is smiling on our knees,
Convicting us of folly. Let us go—
We will trust God. The blank interstices
Men take for ruins, He will build into

With pillared marbles rare, or knit across
With generous arches, till the fane 's complete.
This world has no perdition, if some loss.

Such cheer I gather from thy smiling, Sweet !
The self-same cherub-faces which emboss
The Vail, lean inward to the Mercy-seat.

THE END.



